KINGDOM ECONOMICS SERIES

Part 1

MORE Excellent Giving

FINANCIAL PRINCIPLES OF GIVING IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

ESERVE BANK

A STUDY MANUAL

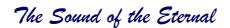
RANDOLPH BARNWELL



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Certain pronouns that refer to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are capitalised. References to the 'Scripture' or 'Bible' are also captalised. References to satan and related names are not capitalized as we choose not to accord him honour in any respect.





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Tithing and the Eternal Priesthood

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND DEDICATION

My foremost thanks is to God, the Spirit of Truth, who is my greatest teacher, for opening the eyes of my understanding to see the wonderful truths embedded within the written Word in reference to financial giving.

This present manual on finances in God's Kingdom is the result of years of study on the subject. This subject has long intrigued and fascinated me. Earlier manuals and teachings on this subject were produced, which were then adapted and expanded as the new understanding and insights were revealed to me by the Spirit of Truth. Also, in recent years, I am deeply grateful for the grace of God resident in certain individuals, whose revelation and knowledge of Kingdom Finances have greatly helped to anchor and provide a broad and more accurate framework of understanding for me on this subject. These 'sent ones' are Apostles Thamo Naidoo, Sagie Govender and Frans Du Plessis. To these men of God, I offer my deepest gratitude.

I also offer my gratitude to many other servants of God who have in some way influenced my points of view on the subject of finances. To these, I am also grateful. The bibliography at the back of this manual reveals some of these individuals.

I would like to thank my wife, Rene, who functioned as the primary editor of the manual's content. I am grateful for your loving support, words of encouragement and the long hours that you have devoted in proof-reading and editing - making this publication exportable to the nations of the earth.

I would also like to thank my PA and secretary, Julienne, for assisting in the editing process and for the printing and binding of this manual. Your faithfulness and diligence ascends to the Lord above.

I dedicate this study manual to my spiritual family at Eternal Sound Ministries. Words fail to express my profound and sincere love for you all. Thank you for your partnership with me in executing the purposes of God globally. It is my highest honour and most humbling privilege to provide spiritual oversight to people of such remarkable Christ-like stature. May you all occupy a strong position of economic ascendency and prominence.

ENDORSEMENTS

Teachings on biblical economics (or finances) have been subjected to controversy and diverse interpretations in Christendom. Yet we cannot deny that the issue of finances is extensively discussed in the Holy Scriptures - having played an integral role in the regulation of spiritual worship in the Old Covenant. History is replete with examples of the success and prosperity of the Jewish people who have lived by these principles. For us in the New Covenant the challenge is found in the extraction and application of the eternal principles resident in the Old Covenant. I'm convicted that the adoption of these principles will eliminate the indigent culture prevalent among so many sincere believers.

In the New Covenant believers have correctly been taught that 'it is more blessed to give than to receive.' Obviously accompanying such teachings is the emergence of an avaricious element that uses these teachings to peddle the Word of God for self-enrichment. Yet should we adopt an extreme position by refraining from broaching this contentious subject, we may be guilty of condoning the falsities of the prevailing prosperity cult and its false teachings. Only by raising the standard by presenting an 'accurate,' accountable and transparent biblical system for the administration and distribution of our finances can we stop the flood of error. Therefore we need to encourage the emergence of fresh biblical perspectives in this regard.

This manuscript presents a fresh perspective of how one should read and thereby apply the eternal biblical principles in the administration of one's finances. It is written from the perspective that Christ (the living Word) did not come to abolish but *fulfill* the Law. He was the manifestation of the Word that became flesh and dwelt amongst us. His lifestyle was that of the Word dwelling in a human body by selflessly giving to the point of being the perfect, sinless offering on the cross of Calvary. The ministry of Jesus teaches us that through a life poured out like a drink offering we can dispossess ourselves of ourselves and thereby become the perfect offering to God.

Randolph epitomizes what he teaches. He selflessly lives for God. His motivation is to empower people to live effectively as the stewards of Christ in the earth. Not only does he teach with conviction, but he has also become what he teaches. Having had the privilege to spiritually father him, I have observed his strict adherence to the Word of God in some of the darkest times of his life. He learnt to diligently give in times of extreme lack and poverty. Through his piercings he ministers the riches of Christ. Hence he does not only teach us the commandments of God but also the *testimony* of Jesus. By following the principles set out in this manuscript, I'm convinced that one will live a prosperous and blessed life in a world of dire economic and political crisis.

Thamo Naidoo Gate Ministries - Sandton South Africa In God's providential timetable, He releases deposits of revelatory grace for kingdom advancement. There are many historical examples of this in the Canon of scripture and in past and present expressions of revelatory writings from anointed men and women of God. In each instance, God looks for a vessel that can inculcate the revelation, and then He must find a vessel that can articulate the revelation in oral and in written form.

In Randolph Barnwell, an emerging Apostle from Durban, South Africa, God has found such a vessel. His new release: "More Excellent Giving; Financial Principles of Giving In The Kingdom of God" is a standard bearer for biblical and practical foundations on giving. Randolph's masterful weaving of the principles of giving with the aspects of rendering honor where honor is due is stellar.

I believe this work should be required reading for every five-fold leadership training initiative. Furthermore, the principles herein should be taught in every present season household where truth is honored and esteemed. This subject of proper financial stewardship is one of the most misunderstood and misapplied areas of truth in the church today. Setting ones house in order in this realm will restore much need light and life to the body of Christ presently. May the Spirit of the Lord open your heart and mind to hear what the Lord is saying through this anointed manual.

Thank you Randolph for this gift to the body of Christ!

Apostle Eric Warren Equip U Ministries Columbus, Ohio USA

I highly recommend *More Excellent Giving*, an amazing manual by Pastor Randolph Barnwell. This is a must for all Pastors, Leaders and every member of the Body of Christ. Poverty is a curse on creation and it is our responsibility as the Body of Christ to set the nations free from this plague. Pastor Randolph Barnwell has put together a manual with timeless biblical truths and principles that will revolutionize any Christian and Church, and propel them to do great exploits for the Kingdom of God. This is a priceless manual and a great inspirational study for all who desire to *"Be a blessing to the families of the earth"*. As you study these truths and apply them to your life, I believe that you will embark on a fulfilling journey of making poverty history, which is definitely part of the great commission given to us by our Lord Jesus Christ.

> Dr Basil Tryon New Covenant Fellowship Durban, South Africa

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Study Manual Format

A Word from Eternal Publishing

This Study Manual is an Eternal Publishing publication. The mission of Eternal Publishing is to produce and facilitate the rapid distribution of various resources designed to educate and upgrade all people in the world concerning relevant key issues, concepts and principles that are essential to function effectively in fulfilling both individual and corporate divine destiny. All resources produced are freely downloadable from Randolph Barnwell's website: <u>www.randolphbarnwell.com</u>. Material may be downloaded in pdf format, and/or audio files. Power-point slides used to present this material is available free on request via email.

This Study Manual, Kingdom Economics Series Part 1 - 'More Excellent Giving', may be downloaded in one of the following forms:

- 1. The entire manual as a PDF document.
- 2. Specific chapters of the manual as separate PDF documents.
- 3. The entire manual in e-book format.
- 4. The manual as an audio book.
- 5. Specific chapters of the manual as audio-files.

Hard copies of this and other manuals are sold at a reasonable price simply to cover printing and binding costs, and postal charges where applicable. Orders of hard copies of manuals and other resources can be made using the order form at the back of this manual.

This specific publication is in a <u>STUDY MANUAL FORMAT</u>: It is produced as a resource tool/aid for teachers and preachers of God's Word and for believers who adopt a more serious enquiry into the Scriptures. It aims to be as thorough as possible in presenting principles on the subject at hand as the Spirit of God has illuminated and inspired the writer. The attempt is made to present a clear and accurate explanation of relevant passages of Scripture as the original text would suggest. For this reason, and where necessary, actual Hebrew and Greek words are cited together with their range of meanings to validate a principle presented and also to provide further elucidation. The actual relevant Scriptural passages - both brief and lengthy ones - are presented and quoted in the manual as a key component of it.

Explanations of the meaning of Hebrew and Greek words and the meaning of names and places are presented in the following way: The word or name is listed in **bold text format**, followed by an '**is equal to'** symbol (=), e.g. **Delay = 'ahar' =** to hesitate, tarry, defer, to hold back, to come too late.

The meanings of the Hebrew and Greek words are extracted from the following sources, viz.

- Brown-Driver Brigg's Hebrew Definitions
- The Complete Word Dictionary of the Old Testament,
- The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament;
- Enhanced Strong's Lexicon
- New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance
- Thayer's Greek Definitions
- Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words.

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The meanings of names and places are gleaned from the following sources

- The Exhaustive Dictionary of Bible Names and
- The Enhanced Strong's Lexicon.

The symbolic meanings of numbers are taken from 'Numbers in Scripture'.

In most cases, the meanings of words, names, places and numbers are simply listed from all of the sources reflected above to attain a more fuller understanding. Usually, no one reference is used in the range of meanings reflected in the manual. Details of these reference works are available in the Bibliography at the back of this manual.

BOOK FORMAT: The subject covered in this manual is also presented in book form. Each broad topic addressed in specific chapters are covered in separate books, e.g. 'Tithing', 'First Fruits', 'Financial Offerings'. The book format is for readers who prefer to explore to subject without lengthy quotations to the actual Scriptural passages or exhaustive presentations of the meaning of the original Hebrew and Greek words. These books are also available as downloads in PDF and E-book formats.

Scriptural References:

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture references are taken from the **NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE (NASB)**; Copyright© 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1995 by the Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. (www.Lockman.org)

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Other translations and transliterations of the Scriptures employed are listed below with their respective abbreviations as they occur in this manual:

AMP	:	Amplified Bible	MSG	:	Message Bible
BBE	:	Bible in Basic English	NIrV :	:	New International Reader's Version
CEV	:	Contemporary English Version	NIV :	:	New International Version
ERV	:	Easy-to-Read Version	NKJV :	:	New King James Version
ESV	:	English Standard Version	NLT :	:	New Living Translation
GW	:	God's Word Version	NRSV :	:	New Revised Standard Version
ISV	:	International Standard Version	TNIV :	:	Today's New International Version
KJV	:	King James Version	YLT :	:	Young's Literal Translation
MKJV	:	Modern King James Version			

<u>Questions For Personal Review and Group Discussion</u> occur at the end of each chapter. These are designed to provoke your thought on the subject matter and to stimulate interactive discussion. It is hoped that clarity would come to certain areas where understanding may not be complete and also that further revelation and insight will emerge.

Our prayer is that you would be encouraged and your life enhanced through your interaction with this Study Manual resource.

Introduction

You are Far Happier Giving than Getting.

Acts 20:35 (Message Bible)

This study manual, 'More Excellent Giving', sets forth clear biblical principles that should govern financial giving in the Kingdom of God. It is the first part of series of study manuals which focus on the subject of 'finances'. The present manual focuses on financial giving and thus does not represent a holistic coverage on the subject; subsequent manuals in this series will explore a range of issues relative to finances in God's Kingdom. The reader is encouraged to read and study the entire series.

The Kingdom of God, financially, is driven by the principles of giving and receiving. One of the core aspects of the nature of God is that He is a giver, and this essential attribute within His character must be fully embraced and expressed within each son of God.

Finances and financial considerations occupy a significant part of our lives. Your financial behaviour is one of the most accurate indicators of one's spirituality. Jesus highlighted the absolute impossibility of serving both God and mammon as masters.

Matthew 6:24"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he
will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth

Mammon is a demonic spiritual being having power and authority in the realm of controlling people economically. Mammon is a power that controls and enslaves men through the medium of money. Mammon is not money per se, but the spiritual power that works in people because of their attitude toward money. How you handle money, especially in reference to the issue of 'giving', will clearly indicate the degree of control or influence of mammon in your life.

Matthews 6:24 indicates the utter impossibility of serving more than one master. Jesus clearly emphasises that one cannot serve both God and mammon. You either hate or despise the one, or you love and hold onto the other. You cannot be neutral on this issue. The specific 'master' that you love will highlight your hatred for the other, and the specific 'master' that you hold on to will reveal the one that you despise. Here is how the Message Bible says it:

Matthew 6:24"You can't worship two gods at once.Loving one god, you'll end up hating the other.Adoration of one feeds contempt for the other.You can't worship God and Money both.(MSG)

Matthew specifically places God first in the verse, who of necessity should pre-eminently be the object of your love and devotion. If this be true, then we would hate and despise mammon! This is key. The converse is also true: if you highly apprise mammon, then you show contempt for God! The Greek word translated 'hold on to'(KJV) or 'be devoted to' is 'antecho', which means to 'cleave to, or to hold on firmly to'¹. Mammon would like for you to cleave to it by holding on tight to your money in a spirit of greed or a withholding spirit. Every time you release money, you testify to the fact that it has no control or mastery in your life. By this you are declaring your utter contempt for that evil lord that enslaves men through finances, and simultaneously you are exhibiting your complete love for and dependance on God as your source of all provision.

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Mammon and not God, is to be despised. The word 'despise' means 'to hold in contempt, to think lightly of, to neglect, not to care for'². Every time we disobey God by not complying with Kingdom principles regarding giving, we show contempt for Him. Our disobedience in the area of giving and finance actually depicts the fact that we esteem God lightly. No matter how one may verbally express one's commitment to the Lord and no matter how righteous you are in your behaviour in life, your financial giving according to the degree expected by the Lord becomes the true acid test and reliable indicator of the degree to which you truly honour the Lord.

Jesus uses the word <u>'SERVE'</u> in respect of God or mammon: 'you cannot 'SERVE' both God and Mammon'.

'Serve' = douleuo = 'to be a slave to'³.

Enslavement to a spirit of mammon is burdensome and leads to the ensnarement of your will and your desire - you slavishly obey the dictates of this evil power. It is amazing that those who are enslaved by a spirit of mammon may be aware of the truth regarding financial giving to the Lord in reference to first fruits, tithes and offerings, and yet still fail to obey in this regard. On the other hand, being God's 'slave' is powerfully liberating, as you by your own volition, submit your will to the will of the Father.

Our attitude to money is very important in that it reveals our attitude to God Himself. We are cautioned against the love of money.

<u>1 Timothy 6:10-11</u>

- 10 For the <u>love of money is a root of all sorts of evil</u>, and some <u>by longing for it</u> have <u>wandered</u> away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.
- 11 <u>But flee from these things, you man of God</u>, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness.

The love of money, and not money per se, is the source of every kind of evil. There is nothing intrinsically evil about money, but when it becomes the spur for all that we do or accomplish; when it occupies our every waking moments; or when we labour under the false notion that money ensures happiness, security and longevity, then it no longer can be described as a fascination with money, but a fixation. This implies enslavement to mammon.

It is interesting to note that in Matthew 6:24, the devil is not set in contrast to God, but the spirit of mammon. Obviously mammon is a devilish or satanic spirit, but the unique emphasis placed here upon mammon as a specific expression of the devil is interesting in that it highlights for us a key area or avenue through which the devil seeks to control and influence people. Economic freedom must become a reality for us to the point where we can make decisions without being dictated to by financial budgets or fiscal constraints, but that we act in obedience purely as a response to the Word of the Lord. Finances, or the lack thereof, seems to be the most significant singular factor that prevents many believers from pursuing the will of God for their lives.

The love of money is the root of all evil⁴ – that is, not money itself, but a particular devotion to it. Thus, when Scripture calls upon us to hate mammon, we are expected to loathe, despise and show contempt for the satanic force (master), whose objective it is to ensnare us by influencing our attitudes and behaviours regarding money in a manner that displeases God. We must detest mammon and not allow it to enslave us.

Every Christian must acknowledge the claim of one of two masters in their lives – God or mammon? Here again, there is no neutral ground on this issue. It is not a choice as to 'whether we will serve' BUT 'who are we serving?'

Every time we release finances, giving our money to God, we actively demonstrate the fact that mammon has no control over our lives. We offer tangible evidence that our devotion is to God, our MASTER, who also has rule over our personal finances. Opportunities to accurately dispense and distribute kingdom finances provide the ideal context in which we can demonstrate the effortless giving disposition of our generous God.

Giving into the Kingdom of God thus becomes an expression of spiritual warfare also, in that we are asserting our dominance over evil forces that impoverish and ensnare men financially. By giving, we exhibit the victory of Jesus, who in His death on the cross, "disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him" - Col. 2:15.

In this study manual we explore three-fold giving, termed 'more excellent giving'. This giving is comprised of the giving of first fruits, tithes and offerings. One cannot fully explore the matter of 'giving' in the Kingdom of God, without the necessity to address issues of 'Grace' and 'Spiritual Fathering and Sonship'. This is the fundamental bedrock upon which a lifestyle of financial giving in God's Kingdom is founded. Any attempt to firmly grasp and practice financial principles regulating God's Kingdom without being completely anchored in an understanding and practical appropriation of 'grace' and active placement and function within the 'spiritual father-son' dynamic, will be short lived. Hence, I have devoted three chapters in this manual to present these concepts in an elementary manner, as they are more comprehensively treated as separate topics in other Study Manuals⁵.

Consistent obedience from a sincere and pure heart to economic principles embedded in God's Word will lead to a life of financial preservation, buoyancy, ascendency in any economic climate. I pray that your life will be enriched as you study, practice and teach others these principles.

Ezra 7:10 For Ezra had set his heart to **study** the law of the LORD and to **practice** *it*, and to **teach** *His* statutes and ordinances in Israel.

This reading will bring economic reformation to your financial world.

Grace be yours in the fullest measure!

Randolph September 2012

God's Kingdom Economy

My Kingdom is not of this World. Iohn 18:36a

s sons of God, we have been delivered 'out of the control and the dominion of darkness', and 'transferred or called into the Kingdom of his dear Son'.

For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His Col. 1:13 **beloved Son**

1 Thess 2:12 so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

LIVING BY KINGDOM FINANCIAL PRINCIPLES

While we are in the world, we do not operate by its value systems. We are to subscribe to the value systems and operating dynamics of the Kingdom of God, and not to be 'conformed to this world'.

Rom 12:1,2

- Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy 1 sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.
- 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

We are in the world but not 'of the world'⁶. Our most realistic and nearest frame of reference for functioning in life has to be that of the Kingdom of God, and not the system of this present age. The Kingdom of God is an all pervasive superimposition of God's nature and will upon every expression of life and sector or domain on planet Earth and the entire created heavenly domain.

Greed, avarice, cupidity, covetousness, materialism, excessive indebtedness, unbridled selfish expenditure and unacceptably high levels of income inequality, are some features of the world economy that are anti-Kingdom.

'Babylon' represents the worldly, political, economic and religious systems of government that are in direct opposition and contradiction to the spiritual operating systems of God's Kingdom. The term 'Babylon' literally means 'confusion' (by mixing)⁷, as does the root word Babel, of which the native etymology is 'Babil', meaning 'the gate of God'⁸. While it has potential to be an avenue through which God could find access, it has become the venue where satan has successfully brought confusion and misunderstanding regarding Kingdom principles and ways.

Thus it has become a gate for demonic spirits.

Financial principles regulating and driving 'Babylon' are for most part, diametrically opposed to that of the Kingdom of God. We, the church, have to firmly resolve to be governed by the constitution of God's Kingdom, which is the Word of God, and not to be conditioned and influenced by inherited philosophical, humanistic, cultural and even errant theological positions, especially regarding issues relative to finance.

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The word 'Kingdom' expresses God's sovereign rule and reign. God's Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom in that it was pre-existent and is eternal. The mission of the Church presently is to establish God's Kingdom in the earth. "Let your Kingdom come"⁹ is our cry. This determines our ethic, ethos, motivation and is the foundation of all our activities. The Church of God should be actively working towards the restoration of God's governance in the earth until all the kingdoms of the earth become the Kingdom of our Lord. Finances and the financial world represent a significant 'kingdom' that needs to be brought under the direct control and influence of the Kingdom of God. The name **'Babylon'** is also transliterated as **'gates for demonic spirits'** – the portal through which demonic spirits operate in the earth through human agencies. Similarly, the Church is God's gate to heaven (Gen. 28:17-19) and is the agency through which His kingdom will become established in the earth.

Babylon's economy operates by certain norms, standards, values, ethics and principles. God's Kingdom operates by a different set of principles which are diametrically opposite and opposed to that of the world. Greed, avarice, cupidity, covetousness, materialism, excessive indebtedness, unbridled selfish expenditure and unacceptably high levels of income inequality, are some features of the world economy that are anti-Kingdom.

SUBSCRIBING TO GOD'S PRINCIPLES FOR ECONOMIC ASCENDENCY

When viewed from the state of an un-renewed mind, God's financial principles intended to position us upon a path of financial blessing, do not make rational sense. His ways are far above the ways of man (Isaiah 55:8,9).

At a Wealth and Business Seminar¹⁰, Dr. Elijah Morgan, an economist and servant of God, highlighted the following interesting points:

The nation of Israel, an Old Testament type of the church (Acts 7:38), was required to function economically by principles which God had set in place, principles which no other nation observed and principles which when strictly observed, would be key in ensuring that they as a nation would be far more financially blessed and provided for than surrounding nations. It seems, from a carnal human point of view, that God actually did everything in His power to keep the nation poorer than their neighbours.

For example,

- Whereas, other nations worked seven days a week, Israel was only required to work for six;
- They were also to work for six out of every seven years, and also not work in the fiftieth year;
- In the harvesting of their crops, they had to deliberately leave behind some corn (barley and wheat) for the widows, orphans and foreigners;
- They could only own a slave for seven years, after which he was given a choice as to whether he wanted to be released or not;
- In every seventh year, all debt was to be cancelled; also in the fiftieth year.
- Besides all of this, they were instructed to GIVE to the Lord the first fruit and first born of their crops and livestock, thereafter ten percent of all income/harvest, and still willingly offer a range of offerings in specific seasons, or when a call was made.

In the natural, Israel was already severely disadvantaged by these divine regulations as compared to other nations, which had no such laws. Yet the promise of God to them was that HE, Himself, would

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personally see to it that they would never lack, but be economically sustained perpetually. Economic buoyancy and ascendency was to be their portion. God's ways are truly above the ways of man.

Deuteronomy 15:5,6

- 5 If only you <u>listen obediently to the voice of the Lord your G</u>od, to observe carefully all this commandment which I am commanding you today.
- 6 "For the Lord your <u>God will bless you as He has promised you</u>, and you <u>will lend to many nations</u>, but you will not borrow; and you will <u>rule over many nations</u>, but they will not rule over you."

Deuteronomy 28:1-14

- 1 "Now it shall be, if <u>you diligently obey the Lord your God</u>, being careful to do all His commandments which I command you today, the Lord your God will <u>set you high above all the nations of the earth.</u>
- 2 "All these blessings will come upon you and overtake you if you obey the Lord your God:
- 3 "Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the country.
- 4 "Blessed shall be the offspring of your body and the produce of your ground and the offspring of your beasts, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock.
- 5 "Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl.
- 6 "Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out.
- 7 "The Lord shall cause your enemies who rise up against you to be defeated before you; they will come out against you one way and will flee before you seven ways.
- 8 "The Lord will command the blessing upon you in your barns and in all that you put your hand to, and He will bless you in the land which the Lord your God gives you.
- 9 "The Lord will establish you as a holy people to Himself, as He swore to you, if you keep the commandments of the Lord your God and walk in His ways.
- 10 "So all the peoples of the earth will see that you are called by the name of the Lord, and they will be afraid of you.
- 11 "The Lord will make you abound in prosperity, in the offspring of your body and in the offspring of your beast and in the produce of your ground, in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers to give you.
- 12 "The Lord will open for you His good storehouse, the heavens, to give rain to your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hand; and you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow.
- 13 "The Lord will make you the head and not the tail, and you only will be above, and you will not be underneath, if you listen to the commandments of the Lord your God, which I charge you today, to observe them carefully,
- 14 and do not turn aside from any of the words which I command you today, to the right or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them.

Unquestioning obedience to all of God's commands - all of them, and not just those in reference to their finances/harvest - was the key to Israel's success. The same is true for us today. Every Christian must bring his or her finances in line with God's Kingdom requirements.

FINANCIAL VICTORY AND SONSHIP

Financial breakthrough is a process, rather than an event. It is the result of a lifestyle of consistent obedience to God's financial principles.

Financial compliance to God's expectations is an issue that is a key aspect of mature spiritual and divine sonship. The rich young ruler backed away from sonship because Jesus wanted Lordship over his finances - Mark 10:17-31. When the Church globally brings its finances into alignment with the Word of God, then we will be in a position to access our inheritance.

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MONEY AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF COVENANT

The intention of God to transfer massive amounts of wealth to the church is a vital necessity to provide acceleration to the establishment of the Kingdom of God in all the earth. 'Money' and the establishment of God's Kingdom, or the complete fulfilment of Covenant, are linked:

Deuteronomy 8:18But you shall remember the Lord , your God, for it is He who gives you power to getwealth, that He may establish His covenantthat He swore to your fathers ...

If money is intended for God's covenant, what is the covenant?

"God's covenant is to raise up a people in His image and likeness who will accurately represent Him and enforce His authority in all domains of the Earth. God's covenant is the empowering of His people for the absolute release of the Kingdom in the affairs of man – His glory or nature will cover the whole earth. God's covenant involves a people that are aligned to Him and a world that must be redemptively impacted – influencing the entire course of life on the planet." – Anderson Williams

"To 'raise funds' involves human perspiration and planning. To 'release wealth' involves spiritual authority borne out of consistent financial obedience." Clive Pick Wealth is meaningless if it is not linked to God's eternal purposes for the Earth. In the Kingdom of God, the accumulation of wealth is not for purpose of living luxuriously in a self-indulgent manner or for personal financial security, but to fuel and facilitate the expansion of His Kingdom in the Earth. You will be blessed personally and your life will be enriched, but there is a higher purpose for wealth, that being the expansion of the

Kingdom of God throughout the earth. Joseph used his wealth and authority which his position of prominence afforded him, to facilitate the preservation of his brothers in whom the seed of God's purpose for the nation of Israel and the church was embedded, and also to fuel divine prophetic purposes vested within his father, Jacob. Both his power and financial influence would be meaningless if he had not connected it to the divine will encapsulated within his spiritual father and brothers¹¹. The same holds true for us today.

Throughout this manual Kingdom Economic principles will be explained. Spiritual laws operate in the spirit realm and are accessed through obedience in the natural realm. A young boy gave Jesus his two fish and five loaves in the natural, and ignited a process of miraculous increase and distribution only possible in the Spirit¹². If you break a natural law, you will pay a penalty. Similarly, if you break a spiritual law or principle, you prevent God's blessing from coming to you because of disobedience. The 'money problem' in the Church today is essentially an 'obedience' problem. To secure our inheritance in the Kingdom, we need mature 'sons' of God to demonstrate a lifestyle of effective production, productivity, stewardship, giving and distribution. Giving is not something you try – you must live it. Every kingdom has a set of financial laws by which it functions. When money is stopped - poverty, debt and corruption set in. Because you and I have been "translated from the domain of darkness and have been brought into the Kingdom of the Son He loves", (Col.1:13) we now operate by the principles and precepts of Christ, our King, who exerts control and authority in this domain.

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A LIFESTYLE OF FINANCIAL BREAKTHROUGH

Financial breakthrough is a process, rather than an event. It is the result of a lifestyle of consistent obedience to God's financial principles. Economic blessing is the reward of those who have chosen to walk the path of financial obedience. God is not haphazard nor random in His responses or interaction with us. He is a meticulous planner and leaves nothing to chance or co-incidence. God responds positively to our obedience financially, but His hand of blessing is constrained by our financial disobedience. When we limit ourselves in financial obedience, we limit God in financially blessing us. The sooner we come to the place of financial obedience, the sooner we will know financial breakthrough. God only responds to what we do, not to what we intend to do. The faithful steward who through active and wise utilisation of the five talents given to him was commended for what was DONE, not for what was 'thought', 'planned' or 'intentioned'.

- Mat 25:21His lord said to him, 'Well DONE good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will
make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.
- 2 Chronicles 7:14 encapsulates this:
- 2 Chron. 7:14 IF My people who are called by My name <u>WILL</u> humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, <u>THEN I WILL</u> hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. (NKJV)

Note the cause and effect suggested by the words, "If my people" on the one hand, and the divine response on the other, viz. "then I will". God is pleased and activated by our financial OBEDIENCE.

"To 'raise funds' takes human perspiration and planning; to 'release wealth' involves spiritual authority borne out of consistent financial obedience" - Clive Pick. Babylon operates by buying and selling whereas the Kingdom of God operates by giving and receiving. When the global Church comes to a place of financial obedience and maturity, then we will see a 'financial reformation', in which we will migrate from 'raising funds' to 'releasing WEALTH', initiating the accumulation of unparalleled volumes of finances utilised to facilitate Kingdom advancement, like it was in King Hezekiah's day (2 Chron. 31).

PRESENT FINANCIAL BEHAVIOUR AFFECTS PROPHETIC DESTINY

The Scriptures contain many examples of how so many people's spiritual journey and destiny in God was affected by how they handled their money, particularly in respect to the matter of giving. Financial attitudes affect spiritual destiny significantly. Financial and fiscal behaviour impacts your future either negatively or positively.

Negative examples exist in the persons of Cain, Achan, Gehazi, King Saul, Tobiah, the nation of Israel in times of spiritual slump, Judas, the rich young ruler, Annanias and Saphira, etc.

Positive examples include Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Abel, Joseph, the widow of Zarephath, the Shunammite woman, David, Israel as a nation in times of spiritual reformation, Ruth, Josiah, Hezekiah, Jehosophat, Nehemiah, Ezra, Shebna, Jesus Christ, the wise men from the east who came see Jesus, the woman who anointed Jesus with spikenard perfume, Joseph of Arimathea, Barnabas, Lydia, Onesiphorous and Epaphraditus, the Phillipian church, the Macedonian church, etc.

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The positive examples listed above functioned by Kingdom economic principles and were not just well taken care of materially, but proceeded with rapid acceleration towards climaxing the will of God for their lives. Financial rectitude and accuracy in the Kingdom of God is not simply about giving per se. It concerns perfecting one's obedience as you journey towards absolute maturity in God,

'Money' and the establishment of 'God's Kingdom', or the complete fulfillment of Divine global purpose, are linked.

and has a huge impact of the degree to which you will reach fullness in executing the purposes of God attendant with your life.

The negative examples above prove that no matter how grand and strategic your calling and functional placement in God is, if you show disesteem for His financial principles, you will quickly lose your privileged position and be relegated to the fringes of His global purposes, or worst, totally lose your Kingdom citizenship and relationship with God.

Many of these examples are presented as case studies in this study manual, and some are covered in part two of this series in Kingdom Economics.¹³

Our patterns of giving, work ethic, creative and industrious attempts at production for wealth creation, stewardship, management and administration of personal and corporate resources, unselfish distribution to the poor and those in need, etc. all need to come under the forensic examination of the Holy Spirit and be realigned to greater accuracy for greater effect.

The specific aspect of personal financial giving is the first and most elementary expression of financial obedience. The Scriptures offer many guiding principles for this domain of our financial lives. In subsequent chapters, and in part two in this series of Kingdom Economics¹⁴, I set forth the biblical position on this matter.

Kingdom Financial Grace be yours!

Summation of 'God's Kingdom Economy' Principles

- 1. The Kingdom of God is an all pervasive superimposition of God's nature and will upon every expression of life and sector or domain on planet Earth and the entire created heavenly domain.
- 2. As sons of God, although we live in this world, our greatest reality is the Kingdom of God as our sphere of operation, a Kingdom which has a clear economic policy.
- 3. 'Babylon', represents the worldly, political, economic and religious systems of government that are in direct opposition and contradiction to the spiritual operating systems of God's Kingdom.
- 4. Financial principles regulating and driving 'Babylon' are for most part, diametrically opposed to that of the Kingdom of God.
- 5. Greed, avarice, cupidity, covetousness, materialism, excessive indebtedness, unbridled selfish expenditure and unacceptably high levels of income inequality, are some features of the world economy that are anti-Kingdom.
- 6. 'Money' and the establishment of God's Kingdom, or the complete fulfilment of Covenant, are linked.
- 7. Spiritual laws regulating the Kingdom of God operate in the Spirit realm and are accessed through obedience in the natural realm.
- 8. The 'money problem' in the Church today is essentially an 'obedience' problem.
- 9. Giving is not something you try you must live it. Every kingdom has a set of financial laws by which it functions.
- 10. Financial breakthrough is a process, rather than an event. It is the result of a lifestyle of consistent obedience to God's financial principles.
- 11. "To 'raise funds' takes human perspiration and planning; To 'release wealth' involves spiritual authority borne out of consistent financial obedience" Clive Pick.
- 12. Babylon operates by buying and selling whereas the Kingdom of God operates by giving and receiving.
- 13. Our 'financial lives' need to come under the forensic examination of the Holy Spirit and be realigned to greater accuracy for greater effect.
- 14. Present financial and fiscal behaviour significantly impacts your future and prophetic destiny either negatively or positively.

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God's Kingdom Economy

Questions and Issues for Personal Review and Group Discussion

- 1. What do you understand by the phrase 'The Kingdom of God'?
- 2. What is your understanding of the term 'Babylon' or the 'Babylonian world system'? Can a child of God or church have a Babylonian mindset or operating system?
- 3. The Kingdom of God has an economic policy regulating finances in the Kingdom among its citizens. How are you dealing with living in a world driven by Babylonian economic principles, yet having to subscribe by Kingdom economic norms? What are some of your personal difficulties in this regard?
- 4. In what respects are economic principles of the world in contradiction to those of the Kingdom of God?
- 5. What is the pathway toward financial breakthrough?
- 6. What is the ultimate purpose of wealth acquisition and accumulation?
- 7. To what degree is your personal finances utilised for the acceleration of God's purposes generally? Will an analysis of your annual or monthly expenditure corroborate your answer to this question?

Personal Notes on 'God's Kingdom Economy'				

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Do You Have a Spiritual Father?

'My Father, My Father' 2 Kings 2:12

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FATHERLESSNESS - THE PRIMARY REASON FOR THE ABORTION OF DIVINE PURPOSE

Fatherhood and sonship is being restored to the church presently. This is part of the process of restoration that Malachi prophesies would take place.

Malachi 4:5,6Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of
the Lord. "He will restore (turn) the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the
children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse

This prophecy was written about 100 years after Israel returned to Jerusalem from Babylonian captivity (between 450 and 425 B.C.) Israel had lost the enthusiasm that was attendant with the return to their land 100 years before; they were discouraged, there was famine in the land; the temple was completed, but priests were

Fatherlessness is the primary reason for the abortion of Divine purpose.

careless in their duties. In the first three chapters of his book, Malachi's prophecies address many inaccuracies in the nation, e.g. the dysfunctional priesthood, intermarrying with other nations, injustice, unrighteousness and the withholding of tithes and offerings. In chapter four, he closes with the prophecy cited above, viz. that Elijah the Prophet will return (i.e. the spirit of Elijah) and there will be a restoration of the father-son relationship. The effect of this will be to prevent the land from being smitten with a curse. The subtle hint indicated is that all of the erroneous positions addressed in Malachi's book will be corrected through this process.

Curse = Herem = To be devoted or set aside for destruction.¹⁶

The literal rendering of 'curse' here is '**ban of destruction'**¹⁷. It also implies to be physically '**shut in'** as for example, entrapped by 'a *net'*.¹⁸ This suggests that one is marginalised and barred from participating in God's will to any significant degree. "The Hebrew word, 'herem' is also implies "to be reduced or subjugated to a place of such insignificance that the memory of you is obliterated from the earth, and that the registry of the heavens bears no record or recognition of you having contributed substantially to the acceleration and fulfilment of God's will"¹⁹. You will not play a significant and central role in the

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execution of divine purposes globally. Eligibility for use in God's purposes is rooted within one's placement within the father-son wineskin.

The Scriptures teach that a curse without a cause will not settle or light.

Proverbs 26:2 Like a sparrow in its flitting (wandering), like a swallow in its flying, So a <u>curse without cause</u> does not alight.

Malachi 4:5,6 implies, that the absence of the father-son dynamic is an open invitation for a curse to settle on the land. Fathering today is virtually absent and thus, appropriate 'son' responses is equally scarce. It is no wonder that both in the natural world and within the church there seems to be legitimate operation of a curse which does not permit full restoration. But God, in this present season, is restoring fatherhood and sonship, and it is this dimension that will stay the curse and usher in the complete blessing of the Lord. The father-son relationship is God's antidote for this specific curse. Where there is dysfunction in this relationship, there is an open avenue for a curse to be operative. Many have been affected with a **'ban of destruction'** because of the absence of true and healthy father-son relationships. Malachi's prophecy offers hope. It says that God will **RESTORE OR TURN** the hearts of the fathers to the children and vice versa. The word 'restore' is translated such from the Hebrew, **'shub'**, which means **'to turn, to bring back, to re-establish, to be returned, to bring back'²⁰**.

Eligibility for use in God's purposes is rooted within one's placement within the father-son wineskin. This turning has to be initiated by God Himself. Note the emphasis on '<u>HE WILL TURN'</u> i.e. God working through the spirit of Elijah. In some quarters, there is a false representation of this 'turning' in that father-son relationships are initiated not by the Lord, but through the misguided and selfish ambitions of some who cast themselves as fathers and insist upon loyalty and commitment from those

whom they have identified as sons. If God does not turn the hearts of fathers and sons toward each other, then the relationship will not be God-ordained and will thus not have the kind of divine results attendant with it. Paul 'became' a father to the Corinthian Church 'through the gospel' 1 Cor. 4:14,15. The word 'became' here is translated 'begotten' in other versions (e.g. KJV). The Hebrew word is 'genao'²¹ from which we derive the English word 'gene'. A spiritual son must have the spiritual genes of his spiritual father. This 'begetting' or 'turning' moment is God determined and you will know it by the witness of the Spirit of God with your spirit within. This cannot be determined any other way. Your spiritual father is not necessarily the person who led you to Christ. Your spiritual father is the one who nourishes you spiritually with grace from the Word of the Lord so as to completely form Christ within you, and to equip and guide you in reference to fulfilling your personal mandate and calling in God. Timothy, Paul's like-minded son, was not saved under his ministry²².

THE FATHER-SON RELATIONSHIP IS CENTRAL IN MAKING US PREPARED FOR THE LORD

The Lord identified John the Baptist as the 'Elijah' of Malachi's prophecy.

Matt 11:14-15

And if you are willing to accept it, **John himself is Elijah** who was to come. "He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

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Luke 1:16,17

"And he will <u>turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God</u>. "It is he who will go <u>as a forerunner before Him</u> in the <u>spirit and power of Elijah</u>, to <u>turn the hearts of the</u> <u>fathers back to the children</u>, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

Whilst this prophecy was literally fulfilled in John the Baptist, it still has a dimension in which it is being fulfilled and is still yet to be fulfilled. John the Baptist simply stepped into a prevailing anointing that was present within the life of Elijah years before, that God released in his time. He began to function in the same frequency as Elijah did. This grace and capacity to turn the hearts of fathers toward their sons and vice versa, is the specific technology needed today.

In Luke 1:16,17 there is indication of the importance of this process. The effect of this Elijah anointing in terms of restoring the father-son dynamic within the Body of Christ will serve the purpose of a FORERUNNER, in much the same way as John the Baptist was a forerunner and a preparer of the way for the ministry of Jesus. The restoration of the father-son relationship is central and critical to this entire objective - "to make READY a people prepared for the Lord". Naomi prepared Ruth for Boaz. Ruth's consistent and courageous obedience to all of Naomi's instructions will be highlighted in later articles and is key to this process. In Luke's words, the disobedient will be turned "to the attitude of the righteous" (Luke 1:17). Once this father-son relationship is fully restored and functional within the Body of Christ, we will begin to see the purposes of God take place more swiftly and effectively.

THE WORK BEGINS WITH AND IN THE FATHERS

According of Malachi 4:5,6, in terms of the sequence of things, the hearts of the fathers must be turned towards the sons first – and then the hearts of the sons towards the fathers. In some circles there is an excessive emphasis on the expectations placed on those regarded as 'sons' to have proper regard for, appropriate obedient and supportive responses to their 'father', but there is the absence of true fathering. The attention in Malachi's prophecy is made first to the fathers, and then to the sons. If the father is truly a good father, then the context is ideal

Your spiritual father is one who nourishes you spiritually with grace from the Word of the Lord so as to completely form Christ within you, and to equip and guide you in reference to fulfilling your personal mandate and calling in God.

for his sons to respond appropriately as true sons. But there cannot be an expectation placed on sons to be sons in all that IS embodied and expected in sonship, if fathering is absent or deficient. God had to do a restorative work in Naomi's heart first. She had to overcome her personal bitterness, get healed, and allow her heart to be turned toward Ruth, her spiritual son, and begin to redefine her relationship from being Ruth's mother-in-law to being her spiritual father.

Even in the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15), the young wayward son was confident enough to know that he could return to his father's house because he knew the posture and disposition of his father that he would never reject him, no matter the extent to which he, as a son, departed from his father's will. Much of the expectation that fathers' have on their sons, will be realised if their sons know that their fathers always have their best interests at heart and even when they veer off in disobedience, they know that the father's estimation and loving responses toward them will not be altered or affected in any way.

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THE 'TURNING' TAKES PLACE IN THE HEART

The Hebrews word for 'heart' is 'leb'.

- **'Leb'** refers to Some aspect of the immaterial inner self or being since the heart is considered to be the seat of **one's inner nature** as well as one of its components.²³
 - It can be used of a specific aspect of personality:

the mind	(Gen. 6:5; Deut. 29:4[3]; Neh. 6:8);
the will	(Ex. 35:5; 2 Chr. 12:14; Job 11:13);
the emotions	(Gen. 6:6; 1 Sam. 24:5[6]; 25:31) ²⁴

As is evident from examining the Hebrew word 'leb', the 'heart' involves the entirety of one's being – including both the spirit and the soul. In turning the heart of the father toward the son and vice versa, will necessitate a very deep work of the Lord in both the fathers and the sons. This is not some experience that is transitory, but it alludes to a complete change of personality – a radical inward shift to your operation and outlook – and thus a drastic change in the way to relate to others either as a father or as a son. The father-son connection is not a joining for political expediency, nor just to appear relevant to that which God is emphasising in the present season. If a turning does not take place in the heart of the father and the son, the relationship will not have the depth and reality that God has intended for it, and more importantly, God will never use that relationship to steward significant global divine purposes.

FATHERING - THE KEY TO IMPARTATION AND TRANSFER

To the degree that you relate to and obey your spiritual leader as a father, will determine the measure of impartation you receive from God through him. Samuel had what many believe to be a 'school of the prophets' at Gibeah and at Naioth where trainee prophets would receive instruction and mentoring. The term 'school of the prophets' is not exactly biblical – it is simply inferred from the phrase that describes the prophets under Samuel's mentorship : e.g. 'group of prophets' (1 Sam. 10:10) and 'company of prophets' (1 Sam. 19:20). Samuel was an

excellent prophet who had 100% accuracy in his prophetic ministry, but he did not have a strong fathering grace. This is simply gleaned from the fact his sons were wayward. We know that wayward sons are not always reflective of poor fathering – so this statement in reference to Samuel's deficiency in terms of fathering is simply conjecture. Eli, the high priest was Samuel's mentor. Eli failed to deal with the errant ways of his sons. Samuel likewise – his sons also were wicked and he failed to deal with them in an appropriate manner.

Another prophet, Elijah, was a spiritual father to the prophet Elisha. Elisha was a true son of Elijah, carrying his spirit (he even asked for a double portion of it). When Elijah was translated into heaven and Elisha took upon himself the mantle of Elijah, it was in large respect a mantle for fathering. Hence you would find that all the prophets who served under Elijah and Elisha, in the Scriptures, are consistently called the 'SONS of the PROPHET' (e.g. 2 Kings 2:2-5). Whereas Samuel who had so-called 'schools of the prophets' or a 'group or company of prophets' under him, Elijah and Elisha had 'SONS OF THE PROPHETS'. Elisha functioned in a double portion of the anointing of Elijah, and part of the Elijah anointing is the return of the hearts of the fathers to the sons and the sons to the father.

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2 Kings 2:2-5

- 3 Then <u>the sons of the prophets</u> who were at Bethel came out to Elisha and said to him, "Do you know that the Lord will take away your master from over you today?" And he said, "Yes, I know; be still."
- 4 Elijah said to him, "Elisha, please stay here, for the Lord has sent me to Jericho." But he said, "As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they came to Jericho.
- 5 The <u>sons of the prophets</u> who were at Jericho approached Elisha and said to him, "Do you know that the Lord will take away your master from over you today?" And he answered, "Yes, I know; be still."

At the parting of Elijah and Elisha, Elisha cries out to him "MY FATHER, MY FATHER"

<u>2 King 2:12</u> Elisha saw it and cried out, "<u>My father, my father</u>, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" And he saw Elijah no more. Then he took hold of his own clothes and tore them in two pieces.

Elisha gave double honour to Elijah as his father and this is reflected is his double reference: "MY FATHER,

MY FATHER". This, for me, was the key that unlocked for him a DOUBLE PORTION of the spirit of Elijah upon him. The principle is very clear here: To the degree that you relate to your spiritual leader as a father, will determine the measure of impartation you receive from him. The Scriptures indicate that chariots and horsemen separated Elijah from Elisha and then a whirlwind caught Elijah up into the heavens. Seeing this, Elisha refers to

It is possible for the grace of God resident within your spiritual father to be multiplied in you as a true spiritual son.

Elijah as "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen". Elisha was not describing two separate things that he saw. Rather, he was describing Elijah, his father as "the chariots of Israel and its horsemen". This is a reference to the entire heavenly domain and all its resources – now locked up within the man Elijah.

Also, horse drawn chariots were the fastest mode of transport in that day. Elisha, the son, prophetically perceives his father, Elijah as the principle that provides the fastest movement and acceleration to divine purposes.

Years later, when Elisha himself is about to die, King Joash, mourning his imminent death, sees in Elisha what Elisha saw years earlier in his father, Elijah.

<u>2 Kings 13:14</u> When Elisha became sick with the illness of which he was to die, Joash the king of Israel came down to him and wept over him and said, "**My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen!**"

Placement within the fatherson dynamic also must be with ultimate objective of doing the will of the Heavenly Father. Elisha attained a double portion of all that Elijah possessed in spirit. Here, Joash also responds to Elisha as his father. Note also the double honour given to him also "my father, my father". Also the chariots and horsemen depicted in the man Elijah, is now present in the man Elisha. When you function as a true son, it is possible for the grace of God resident within your spiritual father to be

multiplied in you. The degree to which you love, serve and honour your father will determine this. Elisha washed his father Elijah's hands (1 Kings 19:21), and refused to let him out of his sight, following him diligently everywhere he went – waiting for the time Elijah would be taken so that he could receive a double portion of his anointing upon SEEING him taken. There is a huge requirement for sons for walk

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closely to their fathers, so that when their fathers interact with and engage the heavens, there can be transference of spirit and anointing. Similarly, Ruth walked in the inheritance and portion of her spiritual father, Naomi.

PERCEIVING MEN AFTER THE SPIRIT AND NOT AFTER THE FLESH

Paul did not relate to nor appraise men after the flesh – he 'knew no man after the flesh':

<u>2 Cor. 5:16</u> Therefore from now on <u>we recognize no one according to the flesh</u>; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know *Him in this way* no longer.

Jesus redefined all relationships placing greater weight and import on the spiritual quality or connection of the relationship, than on natural, biological or circumstantial joining. When Jesus' natural biological family sought him out, He established a new criteria by which you identify or determine 'family', viz. 'those that do the will of the father'.

Matthew 12: 46-50

- 46 While He was still speaking to the crowds, behold, His mother and brothers were standing outside, seeking to speak to Him.
- 47 Someone said to Him, "Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak to You."
- 48 But Jesus answered the one who was telling Him and said, "Who is My mother and who are My brothers?"
- 49 And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, "Behold My mother and My brothers!
- 50 "For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother."

Note verse 50 above. Your spiritual standing and relationships on the earth is determined and must therefore be regulated by one condition or factor only: the extent to which a person does the will of the Heavenly Father. Entering into deep relationships or associations outside of this criterion is dangerous. The relationships that register in the heavens are those that facilitate the swift fulfillment of God's will. Thus,

one's placement within the father-son dynamic also must be with the ultimate objective of doing the will of the Heavenly Father. Relating to someone as your spiritual father beyond the objective of attaining the will of the FATHER, is void and meaningless. In this season, ALL relationships, especially the father-son relationship must be goal-oriented, and that goal being to accomplish God's will. Thus the relationship becomes meaningful and substantial.

NOTE the following passage:

Matthew 13:54-58

- 54 He came to His hometown and began teaching them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, "<u>Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?</u>
- 55 "Is not this <u>the carpenter's son</u>? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas?
- 56 "And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this man get all these things?"
- 57 And they **took offense at Him**. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household."
- 58 And He did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief.

More Excellent Giving; Copyright © 2012 Randolph Barnwell. Reproduction in any form is permissible, provided that no monetary profit is gained. [Email: randolph@eternalsound.co.za; rbarnwell@mweb.co.za; Website: www.randolphbarnwell.com; Telephone: (+27) 83 2729 579] In his own hometown, Jesus' identity and his sphere of relationships was misunderstood and therefore incorrectly determined or appraised by most people. The people there judged him after the flesh – in terms of his biological or natural descent – "carpenter's son – Mary's boy – Simon's brother", etc. They could not reconcile the profound wisdom that they heard from His mouth and the mighty miraculous deeds performed, with their perception of Him in terms of his natural identity and sphere of relationships. This error on their part actually placed a limitation on Jesus in terms of how He could potentially be of benefit to them. Thus, He could not perform many miracles among them because of their unbelief, which is rooted fundamentally in inaccurately appraising Him as a person ('son of Mary', instead of 'Son of God'), AND inaccurately appraising Him in terms of the validity of his relationships (mother, brothers, etc.)

How does this apply to us today? Failure to correctly estimate and thus place value on someone, on the one hand, AND position yourself correctly in relationship to that person that is sent to you, will limit the potential blessing that person has for you or is able to bring to you. Not that the person is limited or deficient, BUT God has determined that the context in which the imparted power and wisdom embedded within a person, will only find complete and total expression in an environment in which that person is correctly perceived and thus openly received, on the one hand, and on the other, determined by how then do you relate functionally to that person.

As an example, a spiritual father is limited to a large degree by how people perceive Him, and thus receive him. Perception determines reception. An accurate perception of the true identity and 'sent' status of the 'spiritual father' will then cause the people to position themselves accurately in reference to him. By this, the God-determined grace and potential locked up within him can be totally released and benefit those who relate to him.

THE SPIRIT OF ANTI-CHIRST WILL OPPOSE SPIRITUAL FATHERING AND SONSHIP

2 John 1: 7-11

- For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge <u>Jesus Christ as coming in</u>
 <u>the flesh</u>. <u>This is the deceiver and the antichrist.</u>
- 8 Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward.
- 9 Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.
- 10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting;
- 11 for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.

Note in the verse above, that he who functions under the spirit of anti-Christ resists the truth that Jesus Christ can manifest in the flesh in a human vessel. Note the emphasis is not to an historic incarnation of Jesus Christ being born as a man, yet still being God. The context may certainly incorporate this, but the greater emphasis and application is encapsulated in the words '*as coming*', which implies an ever continuous coming, manifestation or revelation. Jesus is the head of the church, the household of God, which is made up of many different households. A spiritual father over a specific household is representative of Christ in his headship over that house. Paul said that the churches in the province of Galatia received him as an angel, even as Christ Himself – see Galatians 4:14. They received Paul as though they were receiving Christ himself. In this context, he was the representation of Christ in their midst. In this respect, Christ is 'coming' in the flesh.

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Galatians 4:12-20

- 12 I beg of you, brethren, become as I am, for I also have become as you are. You have done me no wrong;
- 13 but you know that it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you the first time;
- 14and that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition you did not despise or loathe, but YOU RECEIVEDME as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus Himself.
- 15 Where then is that sense of blessing you had? For I bear you witness **that, if possible, you** would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me.

Acknowledgement that Jesus Christ has come to you, as represented in the person of your spiritual father, is equivalent to what John is attempting to establish by saying , 'Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh'.

Matt. 10:40,41 He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. "He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.

The spirit of antichrist is just that, viz. anti-Christ or opposed to every representation of Christ on the earth. Spiritual fathers who accurately represent Christ will have to deal with the spirit of anti-Christ. Most often this will manifest in terms of some who will oppose the Father-Son teaching or principle, or not deliberately embracing and relating to them as a spiritual father even after

The spirit of anti-Christ is opposed to the representation of Christ within a spiritual father.

acknowledging that this father is indeed sent by God and carries an authentic fathering grace.

In 2 John 1:8 onwards, John instructs that such individuals must not be accommodated in our houses, for fear that 'we do not lose what we have already accomplished'. The reference to houses is not to domestic dwelling places, but to the households of faith – the local church. This spirit is insidious as it attempts to undermine the father-son culture that has been set up and established.

The opposition to fathering is bigger than what it seems at face value. It includes an opposition to sonship and thus to dominion and rulership. Further still, at its core, this opposition is really an attack against the representation of Christ, both in His functions as Father as represented in men fathering households, but also in His function as son, as represented in believers responding as sons to their spiritual leaders (fathers).

JESUS WAS BOTH THE SON OF MAN AND THE SON OF GOD

Luke 3:23-38

When He began His ministry, Jesus Himself was about thirty years of age, being, as was supposed, the SON OF JOSEPH, the son of Eli, ...

38 the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the SON OF GOD.

The principle of 'first the natural, then the spiritual' is a fundamental hermeneutical tool for decoding spiritual truth. Jesus was both 'son of man' (spiritual sonhsip – Luke 2:23) and the 'Son of God' (divine sonship – Luke 2:38). As son of man, He related obediently to earthly spiritual parents in the persons of Joseph and Mary. The Heavenly Father affirmed His divine sonship (This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased), only after 30 years of him being obedient and submitted to his earthly spiritual father,

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RECEPTION AND ACCEPTANCE OF SPIRITUAL FATHERING

As a spiritual father over the church at Thessalonica, Paul constantly thanked them for receiving him and the word he carried as being sent by God. For the Thessalonians, Paul's word was equated to the Word of God.

1 Thess 2:9-13

- 9 For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.
- 10 You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers;
- 11 just as you know how we were <u>exhorting</u> and <u>encouraging</u> and <u>imploring</u> each one of you <u>as a father would</u> <u>his own children</u>,
- 12 so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.
- For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you <u>received</u> the word of God <u>which you heard from</u> us, you <u>accepted it</u> not as the word of men, but for what it really is, <u>the word of God, which also performs its</u> work in you who believe

Here is what the Greek words translated 'received' and 'accepted' in verse 13 imply:

Received	=	paralambano	=	To take near, with, or to oneself, to receive to oneself. ²⁵
Accepted	=	dechomai	= =	To accept an offer deliberately and readily. ²⁶ To take to oneself what is presented or brought by another, to receive. ²⁷ Metaphorically to receive, admit with the mind and heart, i.e., by implication to approve, embrace, follow ²⁸

Thus the Thessalonians did not merely receive only the Word from Paul, i.e. they were not only in close proximity to him or in the same vicinity as him and received what he said, without favourably receiving him. Rather, they not only received him and his words, but they also ACCEPTED him and his words. The word 'accepted' implies they, in their heart and mind, wholeheartedly approved and thus embraced him and his message. Paul and his message were one. The messenger had become the message, and so embracing the message meant embracing the messenger also. But embracing the messenger presupposes that one has an accurate perception of him as a 'sent one' – as a representative of God Himself.

Note Paul's word to the Galatians:

Gal 4:12-20

- 12 I beg of you, brethren, become as I am, for I also have become as you are. You have done me no wrong;
- 13 but you know that it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you the first time;
- 14and that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition you did not despise or loathe, but YOU RECEIVEDME as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus Himself.
- 15 Where then is that sense of blessing you had? For I bear you witness **that, if possible, you** would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me.

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- 16 So have I become your enemy by telling you the truth?
- 17 They eagerly seek you, not commendably, but they wish to shut you out so that you will seek them.
- 18 But it is good always to be eagerly sought in a commendable manner, and not only when I am present with you.
- 19 My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you—
- 20 but I could wish to be present with you now and to change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.

The Greek word translated <u>'received'</u> here (Gal 4:14) is <u>'dechomia'</u> and means 'to accept an offer deliberately and readily; to take to oneself what is presented or brought by another; to receive, admit with the mind and heart, i.e., by implication to approve, embrace, follow'²⁹. Thus, the Galatians, in their heart and mind, wholeheartedly approved and thus embraced Paul in his representation of Christ, bringing the grace of 'father' to them.

In fact, the Galatians received Paul as <u>an angel of God</u> - even as though CHRIST HIMSELF were coming to them. When they saw Paul, they looked past his humanity, frailty and human deficiency, and saw CHRIST HIMSELF standing in him. The highest proof of love and submission to your spiritual father must be tested on whether or not you receive, respond and relate to him as you would to Christ Himself. Paul said 'Follow me as I follow Christ' – i.e. he is saying, "If you follow me, you will be following Christ in me". And note the extent of their obedience to his words because of this: verse 15: 'you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me'.

In time, the Galatian church drifted away from Paul's teachings and embraced Jewish legalistic practices. For this, Paul, in the book of Galatians, cautions and chastises them. As part of the premise of his correction, he affirms how they received him initially as receiving Christ himself. His reference to them as 'children' in verse 19 highlights his fatherhood over them. This calls us to value our spiritual fathers over us as representations of Christ.

The appeal of Paul made to the Galatians is given force or impetus by the cemented condition of his fatherhood over them. Thus, as a father over them he could speak in strong terms to them, (eg. "I am perplexed (hesitation, doubtful) about you - v.20)

Similarly, he could say to the Corinthians in **<u>1 Cor.4:14-15</u>**,

- 14 I do not write these things to **shame you, but to admonish** you **as my beloved children**.
- 15 For <u>if you were to have countless tutors in Christ</u>, yet <u>you would not have many fathers</u>, for in Christ Jesus <u>I</u> <u>became your father</u> through the gospel.

When correction and admonishment comes from your spiritual father, see the Spirit of the FATHER present in them.

Matthew 10:20 "For it is not you who speak, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.

SEE YOUR SPIRITUAL FATHER AS AN 'ANGEL' – A MESSENGER FROM GOD SENT TO YOU

Note the Galatians referred to and received Paul as an angel. This may not necessarily mean they regarded him as a celestial heavenly being – the Greek word translated in English as 'angel' denotes '**he who brings a message from God'**.³⁰

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Angel = aggelos (pronounced angelos) =

A messenger, one who is sent in order to announce, teach, perform, or explore anything³¹

In the book of Revelations, the 'angels' of the seven churches are probably the spiritual fathers or leaders of those congregations - the delegates or messengers of God to those churches.

<u>Rev. 2:1</u>	"To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:
<u>Rev. 2:8</u>	"And to the <i>angel of the church</i> in Smyrna write:
<u>Rev. 2:12</u>	"And to the <i>angel of the church</i> in Pergamum write:
<u>Rev. 2:18</u>	"And to the <i>angel of the church</i> in Thyatira write:
<u>Rev. 3:1</u>	"To the <i>angel of the church</i> in Sardis write:
<u>Rev. 3:7</u>	"And to the <i>angel of the church</i> in Philadelphia write:
<u>Rev. 3:14</u>	"To the <i>angel of the church</i> in Laodicea write:

Rev. 1:20 "As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: **the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches**, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

God communicates to the entire church through the spiritual FATHER over that church as is clearly evidenced in the pattern reflected in the verses above. God's word and voice to you is locked up within your spiritual father.

Malachi 2:7"For the lips of a priest should preserve knowledge, and men should seek instruction from his
mouth; for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.

Exo 23:20-22

- 20 "Behold, I am going to <u>send an angel before y</u>ou to <u>guard you along the way and to bring you into</u> the <u>place</u> <u>which I have prepared.</u>
- 21 "Be on your guard before him and <u>OBEY HIS VOICE</u> do not be rebellious toward him, for he will not pardon your transgression, since <u>My name is in him</u>.
- 22 "But if you truly <u>OBEY HIS VOICE</u> and <u>DO ALL THAT I SAY</u>, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries.

Note the dual role of the angel/spiritual father here:

- 1) He 'guards you along the way'
- 2) He brings you into the place God prepares for you

Note also, in verse 22, how God equates His voice ("Do all that I say") with the voice of the spiritual father ("Obey his voice"). Human spiritual fathers can accurately represent the voice of the Heavenly Father to their spiritual sons. Obedience to this voice, of necessity requires that spiritual sons regard their spiritual fathers' not after their humanity, but accentuate the representation of

Submission to earthly spiritual fathering is essential to bring one into maturity in terms of one's divine sonship.

Christ within their spiritual fathers. The spirit of anti-Christ will consistently fight this truth, and so result in widespread disobedience to the 'voice of God'.

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PERCEPTION DETERMINES RECEPTION AND REWARD

<u>Matt. 10:40,41</u> He who <u>receives you receives Me</u>, and <u>he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me</u>. "He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a **prophet's reward**; and he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.

If you receive your spiritual father, you receive Christ Himself. Your perception of him as an angel sent by God to you will determine how you receive him. If you receive him 'in the name' of 'father', you will get the reward of 'father', i.e. you be the recipient of spiritual fathering. **God the Heavenly Father will provide fathering to you in and through the spiritual father placed in your life.**

LOT COULD NOT SEE ABRAHAM AS 'FATHER'

LOT could never relate to his uncle Abram as 'father'. 'Abram' means 'exalted father'. Lot could not transcend beyond defining his relationship with Abram in natural biological terms to defining it in terms of spiritual reality. Thus he failed even to see what Abram's name meant. He could not see the exalted position of 'father' in Abram. Failure to perceive translated in failure to receive, which then resulted in the non-reception of reward. Lot's name means 'veiled'. Lot failed to SEE – his spiritual eyes are veiled from certain realities. It was only after the separation of Abram and Lot, that Abram was renamed Abraham, meaning 'father of a multitude or nations'. Lot was not privy to this facet of the revelation of the scope of Abraham's fathering grace. Because Lot failed to literally 'exalt' the role and grace of 'father' within Abram, he then could not participate in the role of Abraham as father over large multitudes of people. Another way of prophetically applying this is: if you cannot elevate, esteem and give prominence to the position of 'father' in your spiritual father, his role as father in your life will have a limited scope and function, but if you can extend and elevate in your mind and estimation the value and weight of fathering your spiritual father in your own life.

HAVING THE PROPER VIEW OF YOUR SPIRITUAL FATHER

Elisha, as a spiritual son to Elijah, wanted a double portion of his anointing. To get this, a prerequisite was that Elisha must SEE Elijah when he is taken.

- <u>2 Kings 2: 9,10</u> When they had crossed over, Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for you before I am taken from you." And Elisha said, "Please, let a double portion of your spirit be upon me." He said, "You have asked <u>a hard thing</u>. Nevertheless, <u>if you see me</u> when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be so."
- See = raáh = Look at, inspect, perceive, consider, to inspect³² To look at, see, regard, look after, see after, learn about, observe, watch, look upon, look out, find out, give attention to, discern, distinguish³³

Complete financial obedience presupposes an understanding and practical functional operation in the spiritual father-son wineskin.

As indicated above, the word "see" does not simply indicate a casual glance but intense perception. You must SEE your spiritual

father – behold him, not simply in the flesh – but your LOOK toward him must be an appropriate one

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MINISTERING PRACTICALLY AND FINANCIALLY TO YOUR SPIRITUAL FATHER

ELISHA SERVED ELIJAH

Because of the accurate and high estimation that Elisha made of what the person, Elijah, represented in his life, he positioned himself to minister in very practical ways to the physical and personal needs of Elijah. There are two references in this regard:

1. <u>1 Kings 19:21 (b)</u> Then he arose and followed Elijah and <u>ministered to him.</u>

ministered = sarat = To minister, to serve; to attend to ; figuratively to contribute.
This Hebrew word is utilized in a generic sense to describe various
activities, including that of a domestic servant serving a ranking official.³⁴

Elisha recognises rank in Elijah and submits to him – because he understands that this is God's divinely determined way in which His purposes will be worked in the earth. He becomes Elijah's personal assistant taking care of all his needs. As much as natural fathers exist for the benefit of

their sons in the natural – in that they are the ones who take care of their needs; in the spirit, spiritual fathers largely provide for the spiritual needs of their sons. It is biblical for sons to respond appropriately then to take care of the practical and material needs of their spiritual fathers. By this process, the grace resident within the father is released.

Spiritual sons should take care of the practical and material needs of their spiritual fathers. By this process, added divine grace resident within the father is released.

2. **2 Kings 3:11** But Jehoshaphat said, "Is there not a prophet of the Lord here , that we may inquire of the Lord by him?" And one of the king of Israel's servants answered and said, "Elisha the son of Shaphat is here, who used to pour water on the hands of Elijah."

Here Elisha's greatest validating factor making him eligible to minister prophetically, giving direction to a king, was not so much his miracles, nor accurate prophetic record up to that point, but the way in which he positioned himself in reference to Elijah - by pouring water on his hands, an image which refers to the readiness to execute divine purpose.

TIMOTHY SERVED PAUL

Timothy also positioned himself as one who served the spiritual interests and practical needs of Paul, his spiritual father:

Phil. 2:19-24

- 19 But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition.
- 20 For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare.
- 21 For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus.
- 22 But you know of his proven worth, that <u>he served with me</u> in the furtherance of the gospel like a <u>child serving his father</u>.

Note that in Paul's mind, Timothy is **SERVING WITH him**, by actually **SERVING HIM.** When you serve the practical needs of your spiritual father, you are in essence serving **WITH him** as he executes the will of God.

OTHER EXAMPLES INCLUDE ...

JOSHUA SERVING MOSES

Ex. 24:13 So Moses arose with Joshua <u>his servant</u>, and Moses went up to the mountain of God.
 Ex. 33:11 Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend. When Moses returned to the camp, <u>his servant</u> Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent.

RUTH SERVING NAOMI

In the book of Ruth, Ruth symbolically represents perfected spiritual sonship. She is described as "better than seven sons" to Naomi (Ruth 4:15). This automatically casts Naomi in the symbolic role of a spiritual father. Ruth's (the spiritual son) rapid movement into complete redemption by Boaz (who symbolically represents Christ), was amongst other things, because of the manner in which she consistently ministered to the material and practical needs of Naomi (the spiritual father).

- **<u>Ruth 2:11</u>** Boaz replied to her, "**All that you have done** for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband has been fully reported to me,
- **Ruth 3:17** She said, "These six *measures* of barley he gave to me, for he said, 'Do not go to your mother-in-law **empty-handed**."

BARNABAS SERVING THE APOSTLES

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

Barnabas' name means 'son of consolation' or 'son of encouragement'. Embedded within the very meaning of his name is the idea of sonship. He sold a tract of land he owned and gave the entire proceeds of the sale to the apostles, who in that context represented the principle of spiritual fathering to both him and to new season that God had initiated. He laid the money at the apostles'

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feet, which is suggestive of the fact that his financial support of them provided progression and momentum to their apostolic endeavours.

EPAPHRODITUS SERVING PAUL

Philippians 2:25-30

- 25 But I thought it necessary <u>to send to you Epaphroditus</u>, <u>my brother</u> and <u>fellow worker</u> and <u>fellow</u> <u>soldier</u>, who is also <u>your messenger</u> and <u>minister to my need</u>;
- 26 because he was longing for you all and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick.
- 27 For indeed he was sick to the point of death, but God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, so that I would not have sorrow upon sorrow.
- 28 Therefore I have sent him all the more eagerly so that when you see him again you may rejoice and I may be less concerned about you.
- 29 Receive him then in the Lord with all joy, and hold men like him in high regard;
- 30 because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life <u>to complete what was</u> <u>deficient in your service to me.</u>

Epaphroditus was Paul's spiritual son. Amongst the many descriptions accorded to him in Phil 2:25, he is also referred to as 'a minister to Paul's need'. He risked 'life and limb' in his commitment to minister to the practical needs of Paul.

> ONESIPHORUS SERVING PAUL

2 Timothy 1:16-18

- 16 The Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains;
- 17 but when he was in Rome, <u>he eagerly searched for me and found me</u>—
- 18 the Lord grant to him to find mercy from the Lord on that day—and you know very well what services he rendered at Ephesus.

Onesiphorus too was Paul's spiritual son. He lived in Ephesus, and while Paul was there, he ministered in practical ways to him – see v.18.

'Services' = diakoneo = to be an attendant, that is wait upon (menially or as a host, friend)³⁵ to minister, to attend to anything, that may serve another's interests³⁶ to minister a thing to one, to serve one or by supplying anything³⁷

During Paul's Roman imprisonment, he left Ephesus, making a long journey to 'eagerly search' for Paul to bring him refreshment (v.16). The name 'Onesiphorus' means **'bringing advantage'** or **'profit bringing'**.³⁸ Spiritual sons bring advantage and profit to their spiritual fathers by refreshing them through various practical ways.

Refreshed = anapsucho =To bring relief, to cool off, to recover from the effects of heat, to take air,
to revive.³⁹
Describes refrigerating or refreshing with cool air as the body when
overheated,⁴⁰
Figuratively, 'to relieve when under distress'.⁴¹

In a time when everyone in Asia deserted Paul (2 Tim 1:15), Onesiphorus sought him out, identified with trial, refreshed him and relieved him of his distress by ministering to him practically. It would seem that he acts representatively of the church to he gave oversight, for Paul prays that not only he, but HIS ENTIRE HOUSEHOLD find mercy from the Lord. The HOUSEHOLD of Onesiphorus also received special greetings from Paul (2 Tim 4:19). By ministering practically and financially to their apostolic fathering source, leaders of churches may confer special spiritual blessing and privilege upon the churches they lead.

DAVID'S MEN SERVING HIM

Note the emphasis of the following verses, which highlight how men came to David to help him:

<u>1 Chron. 11:10</u> Now these are the heads of the mighty men whom David had, <u>who gave him strong</u> <u>support in his kingdom</u>, together with all Israel, to make him king, according to the word of the LORD concerning Israel.

Support = chazaq = to be strong, to strengthen, to be courageous⁴² to grow firm, be resolute⁴³

- (KJV) These also are the chief of the mighty men whom David had, who <u>strengthened</u> <u>themselves with him</u> in his kingdom, and with all Israel, to make him king, according to the word of the LORD concerning Israel.
- (MSG) These are the chiefs of David's Mighty Men, the ones who linked arms with him as he took up his kingship, with all Israel joining in, helping him become king in just the way GOD had spoken regarding Israel.
- **<u>1 Chron. 12:1</u>** Now these are the ones who came to David at Ziklag, while he was still restricted because of Saul the son of Kish; and they were among the mighty <u>men who helped *him* in war</u>.
 - Help = azar =To surround, to protect or aid, to help, to succour.44To support, to give material or non-material encouragement to a person.45
- 1 Chron 12: 17,18David went out to meet them, and said to them, "If you come peacefully to me to
help me, my heart shall be united with you; but if to betray me to my adversaries,
since there is no wrong in my hands, may the God of our fathers look on it and
decide." Then the Spirit came upon Amasai, who was the chief of the thirty, and he
said, "We are yours, O David, And with you, O son of Jesse! Peace, peace to you,
And peace to him who helps you; Indeed, your God helps you!" Then David
received them and made them captains of the band.
- 1 Chron. 12:20,21They helped David against the band of raiders, for they were all mighty men of
valor, and were captains in the army. For day by day men came to David to help
him, until there was a great army like the army of God.
- <u>Note</u> : The examples quoted above are further explored in greater depth in part two of this series on Kingdom Economics.

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CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The financial principles laid out in this manual make very little sense if one does not fully understand the principles of spiritual fathering and sonship. Global divine purposes are attendant within the father-son wineskin. God's will requires finances to facilitate its efficient execution. Authentic and accurate spiritual fathers have vested within them a custody of God's intentions and agenda for those under their spiritual oversight, and some spiritual fathers have a wider apostolic mandate that encompasses many people, households of faith, cities, regions and nations far beyond their immediate spiritual jurisdictional influence. Financial and practical support by spiritual sons will ensure that the stewardship of their spiritual fathers over the multi-faceted domains of God's will that they are called to administrate, is managed without undue concern over economic and fiscal matters.

Great grace and peace be with you.

Summation of 'Do you have a Spiritual Father' Principles

- 1. Complete financial obedience presupposes an understanding and practical functional operation in the spiritual father-son wineskin.
- 2. Fatherlessness is the primary reason for the abortion of divine purpose.
- 3. A curse persists so long as fathering and sonship are not fully restored in the earth.
- 4. The curse attendant with fatherlessness and the resultant orphan culture causes one to be reduced or subjugated to a place of such insignificance that the memory of you is obliterated from the earth, and that the registry of the heavens bears no record or recognition of you having contributed substantially to the acceleration and fulfilment of God's will.
- 5. Eligibility for use in God's purposes is rooted within one's placement within the father-son wineskin.
- 6. Your spiritual father is one who nourishes you spiritually with grace from the Word of the Lord so as to completely form Christ within you, and to equip and guide you in reference to fulfilling your personal mandate and calling in God.
- 7. Once the father-son wineskin is fully restored and functional within the Body of Christ, we will begin to see the purposes of God take place more swiftly and effectively.
- 8. The father-son connection is not a joining for political expediency, nor just to appear relevant to that which God is emphasising in the present season. If a turning does not take place in the heart of the father and the son, the relationship will not have the depth and reality that God has intended for it, and more important, God will never use that relationship to steward significant global divine purposes.
- 9. To the degree that you relate to your spiritual leader as a father, will determine the measure of impartation you receive from him.
- 10. It is possible for the grace of God resident within your spiritual father to be multiplied in you as a true spiritual son.
- 11. There is a huge requirement for sons for walk closely to their fathers, so that when their fathers interact with and engage the heavens, there can be transference of spirit and anointing.
- 12. Ones placement within the father-son dynamic also must be with the ultimate objective of doing the will of the Heavenly Father. Relating to someone as your spiritual father beyond the objective of attaining the will of the HEAVENLY FATHER, is void and meaningless.
- 13. The spiritual father-son relationship must be goal-oriented, and that goal being to accomplish God's will. Thus the relationship becomes meaningful and substantial.
- 14. The spirit of anti-Christ is opposed to the representation of Christ within a spiritual father, and the representation of Christ within a spiritual son.

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- 15. Submission to earthly spiritual fathering is essential to bring one into maturity in terms of one's divine sonship.
- 16. Earthly spiritual fathers can accurately represent the voice of the Heavenly Father to their spiritual sons. Obedience to this voice, of necessity requires that spiritual sons regard their spiritual fathers' not after their humanity, but accentuate the representation of Christ within their spiritual fathers.
- 17. If you can extend and elevate in your mind and estimation the value and weight of fathering which your spiritual father possesses, then God will increase the impact and sphere of fathering by your spiritual father in your own life.
- 18. It is biblical for sons to respond appropriately and to take care of the practical and material needs of their spiritual fathers. By this process, the grace resident within the father is released.
- 19. Financial and practical support by spiritual sons will ensure that the stewardship of their spiritual fathers over the multi-faceted domains of God's will that they administrate, is managed without undue concern over economic and fiscal matters.

Do You Have a Spiritual Father?

Questions and Issues for Personal Review and Group Discussion

- 1. What is the primary reason for the abortion of divine purpose and persistence of a curse in the earth?
- 2. Discuss fully all possible meanings and ramifications of a prevailing curse because of disconnection between fathers and sons both in the natural and in the spiritual.
- 3. How does one determine who your spiritual father is?
- 4. What is the role and function of a spiritual father?
- 5. How crucial is the issue of accurate perception and acceptance of the Fathering grace within one sent to you, to function representatively as your spiritual father in the Lord?
- 6. In what respect is the spirit of Anti-Christ in opposition to the spiritual father-son dynamic?
- 7. Using the Elijah-Elisha model of spiritual fathering and sonship, explore the importance of a spiritual son practically supporting a spiritual father as a critical component of the son coming into a double portion anointing of his father.
- 8. How important is the linkage between spiritual fathering-sonship on the one hand, and financial obedience on the other? Discuss this connection, quoting biblical examples, to substantiate your view.
- 9. What are some of the practical ways a spiritual son can bring 'refreshment' to a spiritual father?

Personal Notes on 'God's Kingdom Economy'				

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Connecting to and Partaking of Grace

You are All Partakers of Grace with Me. Philippians 1:7c

The subject of 'financial giving' can never be adequately addressed without significant reference to the issues of 'spiritual fathering' and 'divine grace'. In the previous chapter, the present one at hand and the next, I highlight the connection between the three. A principle that must be accurately understood is that one may be a partaker of the grace given to someone else, especially your spiritual father in the Lord. Your relationship and connectedness to your spiritual father is a vital factor that determines your capacity to partake of the grace of God given to him. Your support and loyalty to your spiritual father is essential for participating in the divine resource of grace given to him by God. Your consistent obedience to the Word of the Lord that he carries and dispenses is a vital factor that will ensure a continuous flow of the grace of God in and through your life. Further to this, one must partner with your spiritual father financially, to receive and function in the privilege of the grace deposit of God in his life.

Before we explain these principles, we need to briefly explore the concept of divine grace. The subject of the grace of God is dealt with comprehensively in a separate study manual entitled, "Growing in Grace".⁴⁶ The reader is encouraged to read this manual to attain a more complete understanding of the subject of grace. This chapter is an excerpt of certain sections of that manual which are relevant to the subject of financial giving.

UNDERSTANDING THE GRACE OF GOD IN TRUTH

Colossians 1:6which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and
increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and
UNDERSTOOD the grace of God in truth;

We must understand the grace of God 'in truth'. Jesus said that His Word is truth (John 17:17). Understanding the grace of God in truth implies that we must seek understanding of it according to the truth of the revealed Word of God, and not according to humanistic or traditional theological ideas of what it represents.

Grace is Multi-faceted. When anything is multi-faceted, it becomes extremely difficult to succinctly define it. The best that one could do is to attempt to describe the various dynamics of the diverse components that constitute the thing. This is true of the grace of God. 1 Peter 4:10 indicates that His grace is 'manifold', i.e. many-sided or variegated. His grace has many

sides to it, and we cannot adequately define the totality of all that His grace is by simply focusing on one specific 'side' of this multiplex grace. The typical definition offered by many is that grace is God's unmerited favour. This definition is true, but only represents a specific 'side' or aspect of His grace. One cannot define the totality of grace by zoning in on just one dimension of it. Grace is far more than God's unmerited favour. In this manual, I attempt to give explanation to some key aspects of the practical functioning of the grace of God. Even this feeble attempt cannot in any way do justice to all that His grace embraces. In Paul's

words, we are dealing with the 'surpassing riches of His grace', a grace so RICH, it is immeasurable and unfathomable (Eph. 2:7).

Grace is symbolized in the manna that Israel ate during their journeying through the wilderness. This provision of sustenance for journeying was given daily. The manna typifies the enablement of God that comes to us through His Word through the person He sends to us to teach or instruct us. When Israel saw this provision for the first time, they called it 'manna', which when translated means, 'what is it' (Ex.16:15). Their vocabulary failed to adequately describe this resource from heaven. Similarly, 'grace' is difficult to adequately define in a holistic manner. Our limited human wisdom and vocabulary would never sufficiently describe this amazing deposit or technology

Grace bestows upon the recipient enablement, empowerment, favour, acceptance and privilege, causing joy and contentment as the person develops into the fullness of his predetermined identity and function as a son of God.

given by God to us. In this chapter we will attempt to give some description based on the usage of the word in the Scripture.

HEBREW AND GREEK UNDERSTANDING:

First, let us examine the Hebrew (O.T.) and Greek (N.T.) words translated 'grace'. In the Old Testament :

Grace = Chen	= =	Favour, acceptance ⁴⁷ Some special standing or privilege with God or people ⁴⁸
In the New Testament:		
Grace = charis	=	That which causes joy, pleasure, gratification, favour, acceptance, for a kindness granted or desired, a benefit, thanks, gratitude ⁴⁹
	=	The absolutely free expression of the loving kindness of God to men finding its only motive in the bounty and benevolence of the giver ⁵⁰
	=	The divine influence upon the heart, and its reflection in life ⁵¹

Here is a profound explanation of grace offered by Thamo Naidoo, a servant of God, who does the work of an apostle:

"Grace is that divine, invisible, immaterial property or veritable substance in the Godhead that empowers you to function as a representation of God, and also resources you, thus enabling you to function in a particular way to get work done effectively according to the plan of God."⁵²

God's grace is the substance and property by which God is constituted. This divine, supernatural endowment or deposit is imparted to a person, enabling that person to become all that God has destined them to be and empowers them to successfully execute His will upon the earth. It bestows upon the recipient enablement, empowerment, favour, acceptance and privilege, causing joy and contentment as the person develops into the fullness of his predetermined identity as a son of God.

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A key Scripture that assists us to understand grace more fully and demonstrate some of the elements contained in the description of grace above is 1 Cor. 15:9,10. This passage of Scripture indicates that grace configures one's identity, mandate and function.

<u>1 Cor. 15:9,10</u>

9 For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.
10 But by the grace of God <u>I am what I am</u>, and <u>His grace toward me did not prove vain</u>; but

I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.

Grace, the divine enablement and empowerment given by God, is what causes you to **become all that God has destined for you to be and do all that God has assigned for you to do**. One should grow in grace constantly. Grace will cause you to function at a level beyond your natural capacity. In verse 9, viewing things naturally and based on his prior persecution of the church, Paul feels that he is the least of all apostles and also feels disqualified from apostolic function. But then he shifts gear and perspective, and calls to mind that the GRACE of God in his life corrects both issues.

Paul is essentially saying two things in verse 10 :

- 1. "I AM what I am by grace"
- 2. "I laboured yet not me, but God's grace with me'

The grace of God qualified him where his personal history disqualified him! Where human failure, weakness and even sin disqualifies us from becoming the men or women that God intended for us to be and thus fulfill a specific assignment in which we are called to 'labour', then GRACE removes all natural, disqualifying elements and validates our identity (who we are as sons of God), our mandate (the specific call to ministry function we have) and the degree of our function (the effectiveness with which we work).

Focus on these two statements: 'I am – by grace' ; 'I work – by grace'.

I <u>AM</u> by Grace _____ Identity and Specific Ministry Role

I LABOUR by Grace Work and Function

Paul both Lived and Laboured by Grace

<u>1 Cor. 3:10,11</u>

10 ACCORDING TO THE GRACE OF GOD which was given to me, like a wise master builder <u>I laid a foundation</u>, and another is building on it. But each man must be <u>careful how he builds</u> on it.

11 For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

The words 'according to' suggest 'in keeping with'. Paul laid the foundation of Jesus Christ in the Corinthian Church. He did this according to the grace of God given to him. He was not the foundation. He laid THE foundation, viz. Jesus Christ. The Grace of God given to him allowed him and empowered him to do this. His work was a direct reflection of his 'grace content'. Had he worked outside of his grace configuration, he would have worked in vain (see 1 Cor. 15:10; Psalm 127:1).

✤ OUR ENTRANCE OR INTRODUCTION INTO GRACE

Your life in God starts with grace and is maintained by grace. Life in God is life IN His Grace.

Romans 5:1,2

- 1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,
- through whom also we have obtained <u>our introduction</u> by faith <u>into this grace</u> in which <u>WE</u>
 <u>STAND</u>; and we exult <u>in hope of the glory of God</u>.

Salvation by grace is only your introduction into grace. This grace has as its hope, the revelation and manifestation of the glory of God, i.e. the exact nature or character of God being fully formed within you. Note verse 2 suggests that you must STAND in that into which you have been introduced to. Your entrance or introduction to life in God is by grace; and you must 'stand' – be anchored and be secured in your relationship with Him by grace.

SAVING GRACE - GRACE FOR SALVATION

We Are 'Called' Through Grace :

We are 'called' to God as an act of His grace.

Galatians 1:5 But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased

We are Saved By Grace :

Grace in terms of God's unmerited favour given to us is essential for salvation and our specific calling. We are not saved by works but by grace. We do not merit His salvation based on personal righteousness or good works. Grace for salvation is freely bestowed upon us. This is what many call 'salvation grace' or 'saving grace', which is 'freely bestowed on us'.

Ephesians 2:6 to the praise of the glory of <u>His grace</u>, which <u>He freely bestowed</u> on us in the Beloved.

Ephesians 2:4-8

- 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,
- 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),
- 6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,
- 7 so that in the ages to come <u>He might show</u> the <u>surpassing riches of His grace</u> in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.
- 8 For **by grace** you **have been saved** through **faith**; and that not of yourselves, **it is the gift** of God; **not as a result of works**, so that no one may boast.

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'Works' is the reference to human endeavour or effort to attain salvation through goods works. We are saved through faith by grace, so that no one can boast in their personal righteousness or their part in the salvation process. Religion is given to externalities and attempts to work outwardly to receive right standing with God. But grace is simply accepting the love and forgiveness of God. In the early church, some taught that Gentile Christians must be circumcised to be saved. The apostles and elders met at Jerusalem to discuss the matter and resolved that circumcision was not essential for salvation, for this would negate the place and work of God's grace in saving us through faith and not by works.

<u>Titus 3:5-7</u>

- 5 He <u>saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness</u>, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,
- 6 whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,
- 7 so that being **justified by His grace** we would be made heirs according to *the* hope of eternal life.

Acts 15:10,11

- 10 "Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?
- 11 "But we believe that <u>we are saved through the grace</u> of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are."

We Believe Through Grace :

Belief in the Lord Jesus Christ is an essential pre-requisite for salvation (Acts 16; Romans 10). This capacity to believe, itself, is only made possible as a result of the bestowal of grace on the person.

Acts 18:27 And when he wanted to go across to Achaia, the brethren encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him; and when he had arrived, he greatly helped those who had <u>believed through grace</u>.

Forgiveness of Sins and Redemption Received Through His Grace

Ephesians 1:5-7

- 5 He predestined us to <u>adoption as sons</u> through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,
- 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.
- In Him we have <u>redemption</u> through His blood, <u>the forgiveness of our trespasses</u>, according to the <u>riches of His grace</u>

We Are Justified By Grace

- **Romans 3:24** being **justified** as a gift by <u>His grace</u> through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;
- Titus 3:7so that being justified by His gracewe would be made heirs according to the hopeof eternal life.

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DOMINION GRACE - GRACE FOR RULERSHIP

There is a dimension of grace that God gives because of our specific positioning and personal obedient responses. We are exhorted to 'grow in grace'⁵³, receive 'multiplied grace'⁵⁴ and that God is the God of 'all grace'⁵⁵ or 'manifold grace'⁵⁶, who gives 'greater grace'⁵⁷/ 'more grace'⁵⁸ to those who function by specified codes of conduct or standards/rules⁵⁹. This dimension of grace is earned in that it requires very clear attitudes (e.g. humility) or acts of obedience (e.g. giving, righteous behaviour). These attitudes and obedient acts are hinted at later in this manual. It is my opinion that this dimension of grace causes us to reign in this life. Grace is both merited and unmerited. Salvation grace is unmerited favour. Dominion grace is merited.

Romans 5:17,20, 21

- 17 For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive <u>the</u> <u>abundance of grace</u> and of the <u>gift of righteousness</u> will <u>REIGN in life</u> through the One, Jesus Christ.
- 20 The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, (21). so that, as sin reigned in death, **even so grace would reign <u>through righteousness</u> to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

At our initial salvation experience, righteousness is imputed to us and we become the righteousness of God

Growing in Grace is a nonnegotiable and absolute necessary imperative. in Christ Jesus. This is 'positional righteousness'. Positionally we are made righteous through His blood and we have a status of right standing and acceptance with God. But positional righteousness must also become practical righteousness where we act, behave and speak righteously in all aspects of our lives. Verse 17 and 21 of Romans 5

above suggests that the condition of positional and practical righteousness is the means through which our initial 'saving grace' is able to grow and develop into 'abundant grace', by which we are able to exercise rulership and dominion in the earth, and thus fulfill the original mandate to reign upon the earth as God's representatives.

GROWING IN GRACE

2 Peter 3:17-18You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not
carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, but

GROW IN GRACE and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory,
both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

The Apostle Peter's emphasis in reference to grace in his epistles are primarily concerned with us growing into and appropriating the full dimension of grace. Note the following concepts or phrases extracted from his epistles, e.g.

€	Grace in the fullest measure	:	1 Peter 1:2
€	Grace that <u>would come</u>	:	1 Peter 2:10
€	Grace that is brought to you	:	1 Peter 2:13
€	Husbands and wives together are heirs of grace	:	1 Peter 3:7
€	Grace is many-sided – multifaceted - manifold grace	:	1 Peter 4:10
€	More Grace is given to the humble	:	1 Peter 5:5
€	God is the God of <u>ALL Grace</u> , received through suffering	:	1 Peter 5:10

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€	Stand firm in <u>True Grace</u>	:	1 Peter 5:12
Э	Multiplied Grace	:	2 Peter 2:1
€	<u>Grow</u> in Grace	:	2 Peter 3:18

✤ CONTINUING IN GRACE

Acts 13:43 Now when the meeting of the synagogue had broken up, many of the Jews and of the God-fearing proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, were urging them to continue in the grace of God.

✤ GRACE TO SERVE GOD ACCEPTABLY IS ESSENTIAL IN A SEASON OF GLOBAL DESTABILISATION

God is shaking every system in the earth today. This global destabilisation of economic, political, religious, climatological and national governmental systems and structures is a divine initiative and is part of God's end time agenda. He is doing the shaking, not the devil. In this context, the process of God's purposes attendant with His Kingdom being established through church across every domain of life will accelerate rapidly to maturity and finish. In that context, the grace of God will be unusually heightened as it will be a fundamentally critical ingredient of our ability to walk through global crisis on the one hand, and simultaneously climax His purpose and will on the other. These sentiments are expressed in the verses below.

Heb 12:26-29 (NKJV)

- 26 whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, "YET ONCE MORE I SHAKE NOT ONLY THE EARTH, BUT ALSO HEAVEN."
- 27 Now this, "YET ONCE MORE," indicates the **removal of those things that are being shaken**, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain.
- 28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, <u>LET US HAVE GRACE</u>, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.
- 29 For our God *is* a consuming fire.

Here in Hebrews 12:28, 'grace' includes the attitude of 'gratitude' and expressions of thanksgiving.

So then, grace is more than simply unmerited favour for salvation. Grace is the divine property, the substance that constitutes the make-up of God. When it is imparted, it causes the recipient to function above historical or prevailing natural norms or capacities, bringing accuracy and understanding to issues of identity, function and infusing confidence to labour effectively at levels not previously attainable. This brings joy to the recipient of grace. We enter into salvation by grace, are developed in spiritual maturity as a result of consistent growth in grace, and attain success in the execution of God's will and work because of grace.

PARTAKING OF AND GROWING IN GRACE THROUGH CONNECTION TO A SPIRITUAL FATHER

Paul wrote as a spiritual father to certain churches and to specific individuals like Timothy and Titus who were his sons in the Lord. Grace is most ideally and efficiently transmitted within the context of the father-son wineskin.

- 1 Tim 1:2To Timothy, MY TRUE CHILD in the faith: GRACE, mercy and peace from God the Father
and CHRIST JESUS our Lord.2 Tim 1:2To Timothy, MY BELOVED SON : GRACE, mercy and peace from God the Father and CHRIST
JESUS our Lord.Titus 1:4To Titus, MY TRUE CHILD in a common faith: GRACE and peace from God the Father and
Christ Jesus our Savior.
- **<u>2 Tim 2:1</u>** You therefore, <u>MY SON</u>, be <u>strong in the GRACE</u> that is in Christ Jesus.

Note Paul's opening chapter to the Philippians:

<u>Phil 1:1-8</u>

- 1 Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons:
- 2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 3 I thank my God in all <u>my remembrance</u> of you,
- 4 always offering **prayer with joy** in my **every prayer for you all**,
- 5 in view of <u>your participation</u> in the gospel from the first day until now.
- 6 For I am confident of this very thing, that <u>He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of</u> <u>Christ Jesus.</u>
- For it is only right for me to <u>feel this way about you all</u>, because <u>I have you in my heart</u>, since both <u>in my</u>
 <u>imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel</u>, you all are partakers of grace with me.
- 8 For God is my witness, how <u>I long for you</u> all with the <u>affection of Christ Jesus</u>.

Paul speaks in intensely affectionate terms to the Philippians, e.g.

\checkmark	"I thank God when I remember / think of you"	:	[verse 3]
\checkmark	"When I pray for you, I pray with joy in every prayer for you"	:	[verse 4]
\checkmark	"I have you in my heart"	:	[verse 7]
✓	"I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus"	:	[verse 8]

One can be a partaker of a significant endowment of grace given to an authentic apostolic source or spiritual father. Paul's sincere and heartfelt affection was completely extended to this church. They too displayed their deep affection and love for Paul, practically demonstrating this in part by their financial support of him in a very significant way, and standing with him in the most difficult times of his ministry. Thus there was an absolute sincere and significantly deep level of the spiritual 'father-son' relationship between them. This context is important to understand.

Against this backdrop, and within this father-son framework of profound love and affection, Paul imparts

More Excellent Giving; Copyright © 2012 Randolph Barnwell. Reproduction in any form is permissible, provided that no monetary profit is gained. [Email: <u>randolph@eternalsound.co.za</u>; rbarnwell@mweb.co.za; Website: <u>www.randolphbarnwell.com</u>; Telephone: (+27) 83 2729 579] GRACE to them – see **verse 2** – **'Grace to you'**. In verse 6, Paul expresses an unusual confidence in the fact that the work that God had begun within the Philippians will definitely be completed and brought to finish. In verse 7, he justifies why exactly he is so confident of the way he feels about the Philippian church, viz. he has then in his heart and more importantly **THEY HAD BECOME PARTAKERS OF GRACE WITH HIM**. The confidence of Paul expressed in verse 6 is justified and validated by the action of the Philippian church in verse 7, in that they partook of the grace of God in Paul.

Two issues:

- 1. One cannot overlook the intensity of Paul's heart toward them. When a spiritual father feels warmly and passionately concerning his sons, the grace of God in him will flow. One of the biggest hindrances to the flow of grace is when the relationship is cold or tense.
- 2. The Philippians felt similarly about Paul, and tangibly gave evidence of their love and support for him in giving finances , but also stood with Paul in his most difficult periods of ministry (see verse 7 "in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel").

PARTAKING OF GRACE:

The KJV renders verse 7 as follows:

Phil 1:7Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in
my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.

Paul had a specific endowment of grace given to him.

- Rom 12:3
 For through the grace GIVEN TO ME

 Rom 15:15
 But I have written very boldy to you on some points so as to remind you again, because of the grace

 that was GIVEN ME from God
- **<u>1 Cor 3:10</u>** According to the **<u>grace of God which was GIVEN TO ME</u>**, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and canother is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it.
- **Eph. 3:8** To me, the very least of all saints, **THIS GRACE WAS GIVEN**, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ,

GRACE GIVEN TO A LEADER MUST BE PERCEIVED OR RECOGNISED

<u>Galatians 2:9</u> and <u>recognizing the grace</u> that had been <u>given to me</u>, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to <u>me and Barnabas</u> the right hand of fellowship, so that we might go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.

Peter, James and John perceived the grace of God given in Paul. This perception or recognition is a spiritual activity and capacity and not a natural one. Failure to recognise that an individual carries within him/her, a

More Excellent Giving; Copyright © 2012 Randolph Barnwell. Reproduction in any form is permissible, provided that no monetary profit is gained. [Email: <u>randolph@eternalsound.co.za</u>; rbarnwell@mweb.co.za; Website: <u>www.randolphbarnwell.com</u>; Telephone: (+27) 83 2729 579] specific deposit of God's grace, will naturally prevent any kind of participation in that grace. You cannot partake of a grace that you cannot perceive or recognise. Before the reception of grace there must be the perception of grace. Perception determines reception, which determines reward. Peter, James and John extended the right hand of fellowship to Paul – they began to share in the grace of God given to him.

EACH BELIEVER HAS A DEPOSIT OF GOD'S GRACE IN THEM

Rom. 12:6 Since we have gifts that differ <u>according to the grace given TO US</u>, <u>EACH OF US</u> is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith;

The church at Philippi was the only one of whom Paul said in direct and clear terms that they actively became partakers of his endowment of God's grace. The grace given to each believer can be increased or enhanced through partnership with a valid and authentic apostolic source. Paul's confident disposition regarding the Philippians that God will complete the work in them was only as a result of their connection to him and participation of the grace of God in him. You will certainly not come into a place of maturity and completeness and finish your personal mandate in God unless you are accurately joined to a spiritual apostolic father, whose heart of affection is openly displayed toward you.

In Phil 1:7 Paul said that the Philippians are 'partakers of grace with' him (NASB) or 'partook of his grace' (KJV). They accessed and became beneficiaries of the endowment of grace within him.

'Partakers' = sugkoinōnós = partaking jointly with, a partaker together with others, a fellow or joint partaker, a sharer with someone⁶⁰

This Greek word is built up from the noun, 'koinonós' (a companion, partner).⁶¹

In essence, Paul is saying that this church shared in his grace – they partook of his grace, not just in the sense where they were blessed or built up by his ministry, but that his grace was imparted to them – i.e. the divinely given abilities which God had endowed to him was now given also to them – so that they could function on the same level or frequency as he did. As an example of this, at one time Paul expressed

Perception of grace precedes reception of grace. Reception of grace determines the reward of grace.

his passion to complete his divine assignment, saying "so that <u>I may finish</u> my course and the ministry" (Acts 20:24). At the close of his ministry he confidently asserts the fact that this desire of his had been fulfilled, saying "<u>I have finished</u>" (2 Tim 4:7). Since the Philippians partnered with him and partook of God's grace in him, he was also thoroughly convinced that the work God had started in them would be <u>completed</u> to the finish. Here is how Paul expressed this confidence in the Message Bible phrasing - "There has never been the slightest doubt in my mind that the <u>God who started</u> this great work in you would <u>keep at it</u> and <u>bring it to a flourishing finish</u> on the very day Christ Jesus appears" – Phil 1:6.

THE ISSUE OF CONNECTEDNESS TO THE HEAD:

Psalm 133: 1-2

- 1 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in **unity**!
- <u>It is like</u> the precious <u>oil</u> upon <u>the head</u>, <u>Coming down upon the beard</u>,
 Even Aaron's beard, <u>Coming down upon the edge of his robes</u>.

More Excellent Giving; Copyright © 2012 Randolph Barnwell. Reproduction in any form is permissible, provided that no monetary profit is gained. [Email: randolph@eternalsound.co.za; rbarnwell@mweb.co.za; Website: www.randolphbarnwell.com; Telephone: (+27) 83 2729 579] Unity is likened unto precious oil poured on Aaron's HEAD which flowed to the beard and then to his entire body, even reaching the furthermost extremities of his robe. The consistency and uninhibited manner of this flow from the head to the body will be determined by the degree to which the body parts are connected to each other, and by which the body as a whole is connected to the head. Breakage at any point will result in a stoppage of the flow to the next part. Grace flows very similarly. The grace of God in your spiritual head or spiritual father will flow to you dependent upon the quality of the partnership or joining and the degree of love.

Colossians 2:19 correlates the issue of connectedness to the 'head' with that of 'growth' and 'increase'.

Col. 2:19and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by
the joints and ligaments, grows with the growth which comes from God

Here, the body grows with the growth that God gives for two reasons:

- the body is connected to the head (Jesus Christ)
- the contribution of each part of the body

The effective functioning of the Body of Christ, the Church, is largely determined by the extent to which there exists a 'holding fast' to the head. Contextually, the head is a reference to Christ, the head of the Church. Christ is functionally represented in men who function representatively for Him, the Head. For all that is in the 'head' to be transmitted to the whole body, there needs to be proper connection to the head, which also implies submission. For increase to be transmitted from the head to the body there needs to be subjection by the body to the dictates of the head. If there is no connectedness and submission, there can be no transmission of the increase of God. In the same way, the grace deposit in your spiritual father or representative 'head' will flow to you in a consistent flow if you are accurately plugged into him.

THE ISSUE OF AFFECTION, LOVE and AN OPEN HEART : The Corinthian Case Study.

The core issue is not simply the question of whether you have a spiritual father or not, but rather what is the quality of the relationship and the levels of observance of divine principles and protocol within that relationship. You cannot just be positioned correctly, politically, in the sense of being able to identity your spiritual father who recognises you as a son as well. The extent to which you are 'plugged in' is important.

For maximum GRACE impact upon your life, there must be a reception of both the message and the messenger.

Deriving total benefit from those who lead you requires that you have an open heart toward them. For maximum impact upon your life, there must be a reception of both the message and the messenger. You cannot fully receive the full dimension of the power of the message or revelation until you embrace the messenger also. Grace is locked up within the person. To reject the person is to reject the grace of God in him/her that could benefit you. In Galatians chapter 2:9, Paul says that when Peter, James and John 'perceived' or recognized the grace given to Him, they in turn extended the right hand of *fellowship* to him and Barnabas. *Fellowship* implies deep and intimate partnership, association and sharing. By this Peter, James and John became recipients of Paul's grace. You cannot fully embrace the grace a person carries until you have learnt to embrace the person themselves. Reception of grace and truth *(recall John 1:14 – Jesus*)

was full of grace and truth) is conditional upon intimate relationship – otherwise, although some grace may be imparted, yet it will not have any lasting effect.

This requires both the leader and those led to have open hearts towards each other. But leaders can activate this process by their gentle, tender, affectionate style of fathering and leadership, built upon the foundation of a life completely embodying everything they desire to impart.

Paul was the spiritual father to the Corinthian church.

1 Cor. 4:15For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers, for in Christ
Jesus I became your father
through the gospel.

This church was established by Paul (see Acts 18:1-11; 1 Cor. 2:1-2). He stayed with them for eighteen months. In his first letter he addressed many concerns with them. After three years of separation from them, his relationship with them was strained. Some even denied that he was a true Apostle of Christ. This automatically would inhibit the flow and impartation of grace to them. As Paul cared for them deeply, he pleaded passionately as a father to them in his second letter:

<u>2 Corinthians 6:11-13</u>		You are	<u>e not rest</u>	spoken freely to you, O Corinthians, our heart is opened wide . trained by us , but you are restrained in your own affections . Now ge - I speak as to children - open wide to us also .
Opened Restrained Affections	= = =	platuno tenochoreo splágchnon	= =	To make broad, enlarge ⁶² To crowd into a narrow space, straiten as to room ⁶³ Bowels or inward parts ⁶⁴ ; symbolically the seat of emotions and passions ⁶⁵
2 Corinthians 7:1 Make room for us in your hearts; we wronged no one, we corrupted no one, we tool			r hearts ; we wronged no one, we corrupted no one, we took	

advantage of no one.

Careful examination of the three Scriptures cited above reveal the following :

- Paul describes himself affectionately to the Corinthians as their 'father'
- With his mouth, he released spiritual resource, grace and revelation to them
- This was matched by his 'open heart' imparting not just what came out of his mouth, but also his entire life
- He affirms the fact of his purity of spirit, motivation and conduct amongst them, and upon these bases,
- he appeals to them not to be restricted in their hearts with reference to him, but to be open, to have an open heart.

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BE GIVEN TO YOUR SPIRITUAL FATHER AS YOU ARE GIVEN TO THE LORD

Consider the Macedonians – they gave themselves to the Lord AND to Paul and his associates.

2 Corinthians 8:1-5

- 1 Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the **GRACE OF GOD bestowed on the churches of Macedonia:**
- 2 that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality.
- 3 For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing,
- 4 imploring us with much urgency that <u>we would receive the gift</u> and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.
- 5 And not only as we had hoped, but they <u>first gave themselves to the Lord</u>, and <u>THEN TO US</u> by the will of God.

The Macedonian church was GIVEN to PAUL, just as they were GIVEN to the LORD. Paul fathered them spiritually. They viewed him as a representation of Christ to them. They were unreservedly committed and loyal to him – being completely given in their hearts to him. If you are given to your spiritual father, just as you are given to the Lord and have an open heart toward Him, in like manner, you should have an open heart toward spiritual father. This fosters greater love affection and degree of connectedness, and so

grace will flow like a mighty stream.

As an expression of their love, commitment and loyalty to Paul, this church gave financially into Paul's life and ministry. Partnership with one's apostolic fathering oversight is a very practical way of demonstrating one's heart of love to them, but is also a powerful means of partaking of and participating in the grace deposit divinely given to them. This latter emphasis is the subject of our next chapter.

May grace be with your spirit.

Summation of 'Connecting To & Partaking of Grace' Principles

- 1. Grace is that divine, invisible, immaterial property or veritable substance in the Godhead that empowers you to function as a representation of God, and also resources you, thus enabling you to function in a particular way to get the work done according to the plan of God.
- 2. God's grace is the substance and property by which God is constituted. This divine, supernatural endowment or deposit is imparted to a person, enabling that person to become all that God has destined them to be and empowers them to successfully execute His will upon the earth.
- 3. Grace bestows upon the recipient enablement, empowerment, favour, acceptance and privilege, causing joy and contentment as the person develops into the fullness of his predetermined identity as a son of God.
- 4. Grace facilitates one's progressive development into the fullness of his personal calling, mandate and assignment in God, and above all causes the person to efficiently and successfully fulfill the purposes of God attendant with his life and that of others.
- 5. Grace is both merited and unmerited. Salvation grace is unmerited favour. Dominion grace is merited.
- 6. Salvation, is not based on human or religious works, but on unmerited grace, and is only your introduction into grace.
- 7. Dominion grace is merited in that it requires very clear attitudes (e.g. humility) or acts of obedience (righteous behaviour).
- 8. Everyone should seek to grow or multiply in grace.
- 9. The grace of God will be unusually heightened in a season of global financial destabilisation, as it will be a fundamentally critical ingredient of our ability to walk through global crisis on the one hand, and simultaneously climax His purpose and will on the other.
- 10. Grace causes the recipient to function above historical or prevailing natural norms or capacities, bringing accuracy and understanding to issues of identity, function and infusing confidence to labour effectively at levels not previously attainable.
- 11. One can be a partaker of a significant endowment of grace given to an authentic apostolic source or spiritual father.
- 12. Before the reception of grace there must be the perception of grace.
- 13. Grace given to each believer can be increased or enhanced through partnership with a valid and authentic apostolic source.
- 14. You will certainly not come into a place of maturity and completeness and finish your personal mandate in God unless you are accurately joined to an apostolic spiritual father, whose heart of affection is openly displayed toward you.

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- 15. The grace of God in your spiritual head or spiritual father will flow to you dependent upon the quality of the partnership or joining and the degree of love.
- 16. Deriving total benefit from those who lead you requires that you have an open heart toward them. For maximum impact upon your life, there must be a reception of both the message and the messenger.
- 17. Reception of grace and truth is conditional upon intimate relationship otherwise, although some grace may be imparted, yet it will not have any lasting effect.
- 18. Your consistent obedience to the Word of the Lord that is carried and shared by your spiritual father is a vital factor that will ensure a continuous flow of the grace of God in and through your life.
- 19. The subject of 'financial giving' can never be adequately addressed without significant reference to the issues of 'spiritual fathering' and 'divine grace'.
- 20. One must partner with your spiritual father financially to receive and function in the privilege of the grace deposit of God in his life.

Connecting To and Partaking of Grace

Questions and Issues for Personal Review and Group Discussion

- 1. Describe the concept of Divine Grace.
- 2. Distinguish between 'saving grace' and 'dominion grace'.
- 3. Is it possible for the measure of God's grace within you to increase? Provide Scriptural support for your answer.
- 4. "You are all partakers of grace with me".Discuss the following questions in reference to the statement above:
 - a. Who made this statement?
 - b. To whom is this statement addressed?
 - c. What is meant by this statement?
- 5. In partaking of the grace of God given to one's apostolic fathering oversight, how important are issues of an open heart, love and affection?
- 6. Discuss the following excerpt from 2 Corinthians 8:5 as it relates to the measure to which people may give financially to their spiritual fathers in the Lord:
 - "... they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God." (2 Cor. 8:5b)

Personal Notes on 'Go	d's Kingdom Ec	, onomy	

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Accessing Grace Through the Grace of Giving

Complete this Grace in You. 2 Cor. 8:6b

here are many biblical ways to access a consistent supply of grace to one's life. One of the various avenues for accessing and partaking of God's grace is through the medium of financial giving. Here are a few examples of the many ways of accessing and increasing the degree of grace in one's life.

- ✓ The Word of God
- Honour of Spiritual Fathers
- ☑ The Disposition of Humility
- Righteousness/ Uprightness
- ✓ Trials and Afflictions
- Prayer
- 🗹 Unity
- Harmonious Marriage Relationships
- ☑ Connectedness to Spiritual Fathering
- Submission to Spiritual Fathering
- Financial and Material Support for Spiritual Fathers

Financial offerings given to one's spiritual father in the Lord is an important avenue for accessing more grace. It should be the privilege and delight of spiritual sons to honour their spiritual fathers in this way.

INCREASING IN GRACE THROUGH FINANCIAL AND

PRACTICAL MATERIAL SUPPORT FOR SPIRITUAL FATHERS

Giving financially or materially to your spiritual father is one of the most tangible ways you express your honour and commitment to him. Whilst the **primary motivation** in giving in this regard is to **be obedient to God** by financially honouring those who teach you and have oversight over you in the Lord, this act of obedience brings to bear upon the giver a bestowal of the unique configuration of God's grace attendant with the one who receives the financial gift. It also opens up to the giver access to the multifaceted grace of God. Let us thoroughly examine these principles in the Scriptures.

* HONOUR THROUGH FINANCIAL GIFTS

The expression of honour through giving of finances is biblical. One of the practical ways in which we express honour to our spiritual fathers in the Lord is to give financially to them.

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Those who sow into your life spiritually should reap from you materially. This is a very well established biblical principle.

<u>1 Cor. 9:11</u>

If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?

Galatians 6:6

The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches him.

Share = koinōnéō	=	to communicate, distribute, impart ⁶⁶
Good = agathos	=	something useful and profitable, beneficial ⁶⁷

In this verse, the one who is taught or 'indoctrinated' through consistent and systematic teaching, is called upon to 'share' or 'distribute' 'GOOD' things (which is anything useful, profitable or beneficial) to the one who has taught him. Elders who **WORK HARD at preaching** and teaching should be given DOUBLE HONOUR which Paul in the next verse defines in financial terms (1 Tim. 5:17-18)

<u>1 Tim. 5:17,18</u>

- 17 Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy <u>of double honour</u>, especially they who **labour in the word** and doctrine.
- 18 For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that **treadeth out the corn**. And, The labourer *is* worthy of his reward.

1 Tim. 5:17,18 (NLT)

- 17 Elders who do their work well should be <u>respected and paid well</u>, especially those who <u>work hard at both</u> <u>preaching and teaching.</u>
- 18 For the Scripture says, "You must not muzzle an ox to keep it from eating as it treads out the grain." And in another place, "Those who work deserve their pay!"

1 Thessalonians 5;12,13

- 12 But we request of you, brethren, that <u>you appreciate those who diligently labor among you</u>, and have charge over you in the Lord and <u>give you instruction</u>,
- 13 and that **<u>you esteem them very highly</u>** in love **<u>because of their work</u>**. Live in peace with one another.

Romans 15:26-28

- 26 For Macedonia and Achaia have been **pleased to make a contribution for the poor** among the **saints in** Jerusalem.
- 27 Yes, they were pleased to do so, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things.
- 28 Therefore, when I have finished this, and have put my seal on this fruit of theirs, I will go on by way of you to Spain.

The believers in Macedonia and Achaia prepared material goods to be given to those saints which were poor in Jerusalem. It pleased these Gentile Christians to help those at Jerusalem, and besides, they were under obligation to them, for the church at Jerusalem was the centre from which the gospel had been spread abroad.

Those who sow into your life spiritually should reap from you materially. Paul argues that believers in Macedonia and Achaia had an obligation to do this since Jerusalem represented the well, the source of spiritual nourishment from which they drank. The Greek word translated 'indebted' essentially means to owe someone – and alludes to a moral obligation to fulfill this.

Paul therefore makes it plain and thus establishes an important principle: The source from which you derive spiritual nourishment and covering, should be the source to which you must seek to minister materially or practically. There was no coercion brought to bear upon these Gentile Christians to do this to the Jews at Jerusalem. It was spontaneous, natural and reflexive. The Scripture says that they were PLEASED to do this.

 Pleased = eudokeo =
 To be well-pleased, to think it good.

 It means to think well of something by understanding not only what is right and good, as in 'dokéō', but stressing the willingness and freedom of an intention or resolve regarding what is good.⁶⁸

Note also that this contribution to the Jews is described as a **'ministry unto them'**. Giving financially and otherwise must not be seen as some act which is not spiritual in nature.

Those who labour with sincere diligence, not being slothful in the execution of their divine assignment as preachers and teachers of the Word, are deserving of double honour and high esteem manifested or expressed in financial or material terms. They labour with the eternal riches of Christ and prepare people for eternity. This is a high calling.

FINANCIAL HONOURING ESTEEMS AND RECOGNISES 'GRACE'

Financial gifts to spiritual fathers honour the representation of Christ they embody. But, it is important to understand that this labouring to the point of fatigue in these things, is not a work of the flesh based upon human potential or toil. Paul argued that he worked really hard in the gospel, even harder than other apostles, yet he qualified this by saying that it was really the grace of God working in him and thus his 'hard 'work was nothing short than an expression of the grace of God in him.

1 Corinthians 15:10

But by <u>the grace of God</u> I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; <u>but I LABOURED even more than all of them</u>, yet not I, <u>but the GRACE OF GOD with me</u>.

So then, when we acknowledge and give honour to our set men and other elders who labour diligently in preaching and teaching (doctrine), we are actually acknowledging and esteeming the grace of God in them that is being manifested through them. It goes way beyond just esteeming the person who is giving you instruction; it is actually a greater acknowledgement of the spiritual resource, the divine deposit of gifting and grace given by God in the person. Thus, when you minister financially or practically to the needs of this individual, you are actually honouring Christ in him or her.

In the book of Malachi, God chided the priests for their failure to honour him as Father.

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Malachi 1:6,7 " 'A son honors his father, and a servant his master. Then if I am a father, where is My honor? And if I am a master, where is My respect?' says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests who despise My name. But you say, 'How have we despised Your name?' "You are presenting defiled food upon My altar. But you say, 'How have we defiled You?' In that you say, 'The table of the LORD is to be despised.'

This failure to honour the fathering principle within God, is directly described in terms of the quality of offerings and sacrifices they made to God. They offered lame, blind and sick animals – deficient offerings – thus have clearly demonstrated their dishonour for the 'name' or nature of God, who describes Himself as a "Great King" (Malachi 1:14).

Malachi 1:14 "But <u>cursed be the swindler</u> who has a male in his flock and vows it, but sacrifices a blemished animal to the Lord, for I am a great King," says the LORD of hosts, "and My name is feared among the nations."

God also describes Himself as the "the Lord of Hosts" twenty four times in the book of Malachi. God rebukes the priests for despising His name. His name is His nature – His essence – His being – His character. The deficient nature of their offerings indicated and pointed to their poor and inaccurate estimation of the Lord. The quality of their offerings was symptomatic of a lack of honour. Financial gifts give expression of the degree to which you honour.

The quality of your financial offerings given to your spiritual father in the Lord, too, gives tangible expression to the degree of your honour of him/her and of the estimation of the nature and character of the 'fathering grace' within his/her life.

The Lord chides the priests, in that such deficient offerings would not even be fit for their governor, yet they bring it to the Lord.

<u>Malachi 1:8</u> "But when you present the blind for sacrifice, <u>is it not evil</u>? And when you present the lame and sick, <u>is it not evil</u>? Why not offer it to your governor? Would he be pleased with you? Or would he receive you kindly?" says the LORD of hosts.

The real cause of these deficient offerings was actually the state of the lives of those who offered it in the first place. **The gift does not validate the giver, but the giver validates the gift**. Your gift becomes acceptable because you are acceptable. So deficient gifts become reflective of the state of the one who gives that gift. To address this problem is not to correct the quality of the gifts offered, but to really address the inner conviction and internal spiritual state of those that give. If the inward spiritual state or condition of the offerer is adjusted and corrected, then the gift offered will naturally be an acceptable quantity and quality. The issue then about financial offerings being reflective of honour for one's spiritual father has got to of necessity begin in the heart of the spiritual son. If there is no heart-felt gratitude, respect and sincere honour, then this would naturally not proceed to manifest itself outwardly in terms of financial giving.

* HONOUR THROUGH FINANCIAL GIFTS IS A BIBLICALLY VALID WAY OF ACCESSING THE GRACE OF GOD ENTRUSTED TO ONE'S SPIRITUAL OVERSIGHT

In honouring the grace of God in the person by sowing financially into his life, you become the beneficiary or recipient of God's grace given to that person to steward. Let us examine how this principle was expressed through the Philippian church.

The Example of the Philippian Church :

Philippians 1:7

For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all, because I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, **you all are PARTAKERS of GRACE with me.**

How did they become partakers of the grace of God in Paul? By sowing financially into his life and ministry.

Philippians 4:15-16

- 15 You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, <u>no</u> <u>church SHARED</u> with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone;
- 16 for even in Thessalonica <u>you sent a gift more than once for my needs</u>.

Note the word 'partakers' in Phil. 1:7 and the word 'shared' (Phil.4:15):

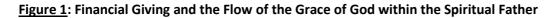
Partakers = sugkoinōnós	=	a partaker together with others, a fellow or joint partaker, a sharer with ⁶⁹
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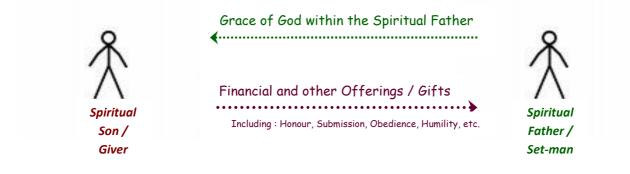
Shared = koinōnéō = to communicate, distribute, impart.⁷⁰

Both these Greek words are built up from the noun, 'koinōnós' (a companion, partner).⁷¹

In essence, Paul is saying that this church shared in God's grace given to him - they partook of this grace, not just in the sense that they were blessed or built up by his ministry, but that this grace was imparted to them - i.e. the abilities and enablement which God had endowed to him was now given also to them – so that they could function on the same level or frequency as he did. How did they access this level of impartation? By connecting with and giving to him financially.

We give in acknowledgment of the grace of God in our spiritual leader. By this we then become partakers of divine grace given to them. We become recipients of the grace of God in them. Figure 1 below graphically depicts this.





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Phil. 4:17-18

- 17 Not that I seek the gift itself, but <u>I seek for the profit which increases to your account</u>.
- 18 But I have received everything in full and have an <u>abundance</u>; <u>I am amply supplied</u>, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.
- 19 And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

In thanking them for consistently giving to him (note v.16 'more than once'), Paul explains his motive. He says that he is not **seeking** (in the Greek it means to 'crave, search for, seek diligently'⁷²) the gift but rather he is seeking or craving for profit that would increase to their account. He says that he is doing so not to extract further gifts from them so that his future needs will be met, but he is truly seeking for 'profit' or FRUIT that will be credited to their account.

Expressing honour financially to your spiritual oversight positions you to become the beneficiary or recipient of God's grace given to that person to steward.

The Greek word (karpos) for 'profit' here means 'fruit'.

Metaphorically it refers to **deeds**, **works or conduct**⁷³ (see Matt. 3:8; 7:16, 20; 21:43). Fruit is the external, outward evidence produced as a result of invisible processes at work within a tree. Paul, by using this idea, is saying that the financial and materials gifts of the Philippian Church will cause the invisible unseen processes of God at work within them to be manifested outwardly in terms of specific obedient deeds, works or conduct and operations of life. This is a powerful thought. There is a level of fruitfulness in our deeds, works and conduct that will only be accessed through our financial giving.

Also, he says that this fruit will **INCREASE TO THEIR ACCOUNT**. The acts of gracious giving of the Philippian church resulting in further fruitful works and conduct, will INCREASE. They gave liberally from a context of poverty, but their giving did not in any way further impoverish them. It actually set them up for increase. Their acts of giving are registered in heaven's account as a credit entry, not a debit entry.

The Greek word for **'increase' here is 'pleanazo'**, which means **'to have or cause to have much, or more than enough**⁷⁴, **to super-abound**⁷⁵.

Note that Paul describes their financial giving as a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God. We are a priesthood unto God and are required to offer up spiritual sacrifices. If we were priests under the Old Covenant, we would have offered up animal sacrifices. But now under the New Covenant, we are to offer up SPIRITUAL sacrifices:

<u>1 Peter 2:5</u> you also, as living stones, are being built up as <u>a spiritual house</u> for <u>a holy priesthood</u>, to offer up <u>spiritual sacrifices acceptable</u> to God through Jesus Christ.

Here is a brief list of some acceptable spiritual sacrifices identified in the Scripture:

1.	Joy	Psalm 27:6
2.	Thanks	Hebrews 13:15
3.	Praise	Hebrews 13:15
4.	Our Lives / Bodies	Romans 12:1,2
5.	Doing Good	Hebrews 13:16
6.	Fellowship	Hebrews 13:15
7.	Material and Financial Assistance to Ministers	Philippians 4:18

More Excellent Giving; Copyright © 2012 Randolph Barnwell. Reproduction in any form is permissible, provided that no monetary profit is gained. [Email: randolph@eternalsound.co.za; rbarnwell@mweb.co.za; Website: www.randolphbarnwell.com; Telephone: (+27) 83 2729 579] In Philippians 4:18, Paul regards financial giving to spiritual leaders as an acceptable New Covenant sacrificial offering unto the Lord. God always responds to the principle of acceptable sacrifice. Paul describes the effect that this offering has on God, viz., "a fragrant or sweet aroma, well-pleasing to God". The financial and material gifts given to Paul had an effect upon God in the heavens. And in the very next verse Paul describes the response of God to the Philippians' financial gift as follows:

Phillipians 4:19 And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

The phrase **'all your need'**, literally should be read, **'every need of yours'**. 'Every need of yours' does not just include physical or material needs, but spiritual, emotional, marital, etc.

Note the emphasis on <u>MY</u> God. Paul does not say, 'GOD will supply your need' or 'OUR God', but he deliberately emphasizes <u>MY</u> God. Here he is making reference to the quality of relationship and favour he personally has with God. By pronouncing this blessing, he is symbolically bringing to bear upon the Philippian church a response from God that would otherwise have been his privilege only. But now, through their giving, they have accessed and thus became privy to the benefits that Paul enjoys by virtue of the specific level or quality of his relationship with God. This is also seen in the Book of Ruth. When Ruth said to Naomi, "Your God will be my God" (Ruth 1:16), she was not just wanting to serve the God of Israel as opposed to the gods of Moab (Ruth 1:15), but she was reaching out after the richness of the relationship that Naomi, as a spiritual father, enjoyed with God. AS a spiritual son, Ruth accessed spiritual and natural benefits and advantages because of her pursuit after and practical support of Naomi, her spiritual father. She migrates from being a widow to a married woman; from being unable to give birth to a son in ten years in the land of Moab to giving birth to a significant son; from gleaning in a field to owning that field; from a pauper to a millionaire; from a Moabitess to being part of the lineage and ancestry of our Lord Jesus Christ. God supplied all her need according to the riches in glory in Christ – but her relationship to and support of Naomi was a vital key to all of this.

The dimension from which Philippian church's needs will be supplied is described as **'riches in glory in Christ Jesus'.** They accessed what was in Christ Jesus by giving to the Apostle Paul, Christ's representative. The principle here is very plain: your posture of giving to your spiritual father has a significant bearing on the degree to which your needs will be supplied.

The illustration below seeks to portray these thoughts:

RICHES IN GLORY BY CHRIST 'MY GOD' (SPIRITUAL FATHER/ APOSTOLIC OVERSIGHT) PAUL

PHILIPPIAN BELIEVERS

* GIVING IS GRACE

Paul taught that giving itself is a GRACE. He devoted two complete chapters to the subject of giving in 2 Corinthians, viz. chapters 8 and 9 (apart from his discussion of finances in 1 Cor. 9 and 16; and 2 Cor. 11). In these two chapters, the word GRACE appears seven times. Seven indicates perfection. You will never attain perfection in the area of giving until you function completely in the GRACE of GIVING.

2 Corinthians 8:1-9

- 1 Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the **<u>GRACE OF GOD</u>** bestowed on the churches of Macedonia:
- 2 that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality.
- 3 For I bear witness that <u>according to their ability</u>, yes, and <u>beyond their ability</u>, they were <u>freely willing</u>,
- 4 imploring us with much urgency that <u>we would receive the gift</u> and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.
- 5 And not only as we had hoped, but they **first gave themselves to the Lord**, and **then to us by the will of God.**
- 6 So we urged Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also complete THIS GRACE in you as well.
- 7 <u>But as you abound in everything</u>—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love for us see that you abound in this grace also.
- 8 I speak not by commandment, but I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others.
- 9 **For you know <u>THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST</u></u>, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.**

Financial giving is a GRACE.

The Corinthian church was tremendously gifted in the area of spiritual gifts (see v.7), but they lacked in excelling in the area of giving. Paul praises the Macedonian churches for their abundant giving from their condition of poverty (see v.2), and even going beyond what they were

capable of doing (verse 3a) in a posture of unforced willingness (verse 3b). In verse 1 he describes why they could operate at this level by drawing attention to the fact it was the GRACE OF GOD which was bestowed upon them. This church had the GRACE OF GIVING. Grace is a divine enablement of ability from God which causes us to function effectively in some dimension of His will.

The Corinthian church lacked this grace of giving, or more accurately, were incomplete in this grace of giving. Paul decided to send to them his fellow-worker, Titus who would, when he comes, <u>COMPLETE</u> this grace of giving with the Corinthians. Titus had the capacity to activate this grace within the hearts of the Corinthians. A year prior to the writing of 2 Corinthians, they had promised Paul a gift, but had not fulfilled the actual doing of it.

2 Corinthians 8:10,11

- 10 I give my opinion in this matter, for this is to your advantage, who were the first to begin a year ago not only to do this, but also to desire to do it.
- 11 **But now finish doing it also**, so that just as **there was the readiness to desire it**, so there may be also the **completion of it by your ability.**

2 Corinthians 9:1-5

- 1 For it is superfluous for me to write to you about this ministry to the saints;
- 2 for <u>I know your readiness</u>, of which I boast about you to the Macedonians, namely, that Achaia has been prepared since last year, and your zeal has stirred up most of them.
- 3 But I have sent the brethren, in order that our boasting about you may not be made empty in this case, so that, as I was saying, you may be prepared;
- 4 otherwise if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we—not to speak of you—will be put to shame by this confidence.
- 5 So I thought it necessary to urge the brethren that they would go on ahead to you and <u>arrange beforehand</u> your previously promised bountiful gift, so that the same would be <u>ready as a bountiful gift</u> and <u>not</u> <u>affected by covetousness.</u>

From the Scriptures we may extract indications of incomplete financial grace.

* SYMPTOMS OF INCOMPLETE GRACE IN THE AREA OF FINANCIAL GIVING

These are actually catalytic in nature and effect in that the first one will the cause the next one, and so on.

- 1. Not being Completely GIVEN to the Lord
- 2. Not being GIVEN to your Spiritual Leader
- 3. Not desiring to give
- 4. Not actually giving: covetousness

1. Not being Completely GIVEN to the Lord yourself

2 Cor 8:5 And not only as we had hoped, but they FIRST GAVE THEMSELVES TO THE LORD and then to us by the will of God.

God had regard first for Abel, then for his offering. His gift was validated by his personal posture of devotion to God. The gift does not validate the giver; rather, the giver himself validates his gift before God. Another way of framing this would be: "The gift only becomes acceptable if the giver of the gift is acceptable to God". The wise men first bowed themselves and worshipped the infant Jesus Christ; then, after this they opened their treasures and gave Him gifts. Our gifts and giving then become an extension, an expression of a life already GIVEN to the Lord. Thus, when we fail to GIVE, it highlights a deficiency of grace in the area of giving. We are also providing very clear evidence that we have not been personally GIVEN to the Lord ourselves. One of the greatest

hindrances to encouraging people to become liberal givers of finances to God and His purposes is that these people are not in the first and primary instance 'given to God' themselves.

2. Not being GIVEN to your Spiritual Leader

2 Cor 8:5And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and THEN TO USBY THE WILL OF THE LORD

Note that they gave themselves to the Lord and then to Paul and his associates. Their commitment to the Lord was expressed also in their commitment to the Lord's servants or sent ones. Many fail to give to God's servants because they have not completely GIVEN themselves to these servants of the Lord. The reason for this is that many people fail to see their spiritual fathers and leaders as direct representations of Christ, and thus in giving financially into their lives, they are in essence giving to Christ Himself.

Eph. 4:7 But to each one of us **grace was given** according **to the measure of Christ's gift.**

In Luke 10 the seventy disciples appointed by Jesus were to pronounce their peace on a home that receives them in peace and ministers to their practical needs. The city that receives them will experience positive dimensions (e.g. healing) of the nearness of the Kingdom. The city that rejects them will experience negative aspects (e.g. judgment) of the Kingdom's coming or nearness.

Luke 10: 1-16

- 1 Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them in pairs ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come.
- 2 And He was saying to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.
- 3 "Go; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.
- 4 "Carry no money belt, no bag, no shoes; and greet no one on the way.
- 5 "Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house.'
- 6 "If a man of peace is there, **your peace will rest on him**; but if not, it will return to you.
- 7 "<u>Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not keep moving from house to house.</u>
- 8 "Whatever city you enter and they receive you, <u>eat what is set before you</u>;
- 9 and <u>heal</u> those in it who are sick, and say to them, '<u>The kingdom of God has come near to you.</u>'
- 10 "But whatever city you enter and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say,
- 11 'Even the dust of your city which clings to our feet we wipe off in protest against you; yet 1be sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come near.'
- 12 "I say to you, it will be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that city.
- 13 "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had been performed in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.
- 14 "But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the judgment than for you.
- 15 "And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will be brought down to Hades!
- 16 "The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me."

Note how Jesus concludes this teaching. He says that if they have rejected them, they are really rejecting Him and also God the Father who sent Him. They reject the disciples because they fail to see them as

Failure to give financially to one's spiritual father is rooted in a failure to be completely GIVEN personally to him as a servant of the Lord. representatives of the Christ. Those who see them as Christ's representatives will honour them in peace in their homes, providing for their practical needs and by this, open doors to positive expressions of the Kingdom of God. Many have incomplete financial grace because of a fundamental failure to regard THE LORD in the persons that accurately function as their spiritual fathers or set men.

3. Not Desiring to Give

<u>2 Cor. 8:10</u> I give my opinion in this matter, for this is to your advantage, who were the first to begin a year ago not only to do this, but also to desire to do it

Paul here implores the Corinthians not just to go through with the actual giving of the gift in a mechanical manner, but to actually **DESIRE to do so**.

Desire = thelo = to will, wish, implying active volition and purpose⁷⁶

It is surprising just how many believers have no inclination or desire to give. A sure indication of an absence of the grace of giving is the lack of desire to do so. The word 'desire' here indicates that one is **disposed or inclined toward doing something.**⁷⁷ It not only implies a willingness to do something, but also **pressing on to action** in reference to that thing.⁷⁸

4. Not actually Giving: Covetousness

It seems that the Corinthians overcame this lack of desire to give and adopted a readiness and willingness to give, yet still failed to follow through on this desire and actually **do** that which they intended or resolved to do.

A sure indication of an absence of the grace of giving is the lack of desire to give.

<u>2 Cor. 8:11</u> But now finish doing it also, so that just as there was the readiness to desire it, so there may be also the completion of it by your ability.

Actual obedience is far greater than a resolve to obey. Failure to actually give is the clearest indication that one is not walking in the grace of giving and that this grace is deficient in you.

2 Cor.9:5 So I thought it necessary to urge the brethren that they would go on ahead to you and <u>arrange</u> beforehand your previously promised bountiful gift, so that the same would be <u>ready as a</u> bountiful gift and <u>NOT AFFECTED BY COVETOUSNESS.</u>

As mentioned, the word GRACE appears seven times in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9. 'Grace is the opposite to 'Law'. The Law is binding and brings bondage. Grace is liberating and flows freely. John 1:17 teaches that the Law was given through Moses, but GRACE and truth came through Jesus Christ. In His death on the cross, Jesus made available the gift of grace given to all men. This grace must also be operative in the giving of our finances. In exhorting the Corinthian church to abound in the grace of giving, Paul draws from the example of Jesus Himself:

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<u>2 Cor. 8:9</u> For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes <u>He</u> became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich

New Testament giving in a spirit of grace as opposed to the Old Testament law, by far exceeds the requirements of the law. When determining your first fruits or tithe, do not be governed by the law of a calculator, but be governed gracefully by the spirit of liberal, willing and cheerful giving. The grace of giving resident in Jesus Christ Himself had no problems impoverishing Himself to enrich others. GRACE does not count the cost – it simply acts in obedience. The specific facet of grace residing in Jesus Christ knew how to place the needs of others above His own. The claim to have this grace by a believer is not valid unless that believer in his financial and material giving knows how to inconvenience him/herself in order to convenience others. Grace gives! Not to give because of a covetousness spirit, is disgrace!

* THE GRACE OF GIVING ACCESSES NOT JUST GOD'S GRACE WITHIN YOUR SPIRITUAL FATHER BUT ALSO <u>'ALL GRACE' FROM GOD</u>

When you are complete in the GRACE OF GIVING, and thus give liberally to your spiritual father, you tap into his unique and individual primary grace. As stated earlier, giving into the life and ministry of your spiritual father causes you to be a partaker of the grace endowment given to him by the Lord. Thus, you yourself need to be complete without deficiency in the grace of giving in order to partake of the GRACE of the one to whom you are giving.

But, there is also another 'grace' blessing that goes beyond the grace of the one to whom you are giving. When you give to your spiritual father and thereby become a partaker of his grace, you also are given **ALL GRACE from the God of ALL GRACE.** Note the following two Scriptures:

<u>1 Peter 5:10</u>

After you have suffered for a little while, <u>THE GOD OF ALL GRACE</u>, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you

1 Peter 4:10

As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of <u>THE MANIFOLD GRACE OF GOD</u>

Note that God is the God of ALL grace and that this grace is MANIFOLD grace that we must steward – and this is done in terms of the sense of responsibility with which we do so when we use our gifts in serving each other.

Manifold = poikilos = variegated⁷⁹, many–coloured⁸⁰, divers⁸¹ [some synonyms : varied, multi-faceted, many-sided]

Thus God's grace is vast, having differing and varied expressions. God's 'ALL' grace is 'MANIFOLD' grace – it is not one dimensional nor static but has many faces and manifestations.

Now listen to what Paul says of the grace of giving - not just accessing God's grace in the spiritual father but also unlocking the 'ALL' grace or MANIFOLD grace of God in your life – see 2 Corinthians 9:8.

2 Corinthians 9:6-8

- 6 Now this I say, he who <u>sows sparingly will also reap sparingly</u>, and he who sows <u>bountifully will also reap</u> <u>bountifully</u>.
- 7 Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.
- 8 And God is able to make <u>ALL GRACE abound to you</u>, so that <u>always</u> having <u>all sufficiency</u> in <u>everything</u>, you may have <u>an abu</u>ndance <u>for every good deed;</u>





To the measure that you sow, you will reap. But if you have sown financially, you will not only reap financially in proportion to which you have sown, but also you will reap non-monetary blessings as well. Paul here describes it as ALL GRACE, which is the multifaceted or many-sided grace of God.

Let's examine 2 Cor 9:8 more thoroughly:

The blessings promised to those who give is an all-embracing one covering all aspects of our lives, not only our material needs.

'And God is able to make <u>all</u> grace <u>abound</u> to you; that ye, <u>always</u> (or at all times) having <u>all</u> sufficiency in <u>all</u> things, may <u>abound</u> to <u>every (all</u>) good work.'

Two key words in this verse are 'all' and 'abound'.

'All' (inclusive of 'always') occurs five times. Five is the number of grace.

Note: 1. ALL GRACE

- 2. AT ALL TIMES
- 3. HAVING ALL SUFFICIENCY
- 4. IN ALL THINGS
- 5. FOR ALL GOOD WORK

This covers expressions of grace for literally every single thing we will have or need to do at whatever time.

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The word 'abound'/ 'abundance' occurs twice. If you have all that you need in all things at all times to abound to every good work, there is absolutely no room for unsupplied need anywhere in your life. 'The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not lack' – Psalm 23:1

'Abound' = 'perisseuo' =	To be abundantly furnished
	To be or have more than enough
	An exceeding measure, something above the ordinary
	To be in excess, exceed in number or measure
	To be left over, remain, exceeding a number or measure which marks
	fullness ⁸²

We get the word 'abundance' from 'abound'. Its Latin origin indicate that **'abundance'** speaks of **"a wave that overflows"**.⁸³ A thing has no abundance until it overflows. This is God's level of blessing to His children who give. God gives you abundant overflowing grace so that in all things, at all times you will overflow or abound in every good work. Again it must be stressed, that this level of abundance will be manifested not just materially or financially but will also characterise your operation in and execution of the will of the Lord for your life generally.

Note the principle: If you excel in the GRACE of giving, then God is able to make ALL GRACE abound to you.

* THE GRACE GIFT OF GIVING

We are all expected to operate in the grace of giving. But there are some whom God has unusually given an added measure of grace in the area of giving – these have the GIFT OF GIVING. Just like the person who has the gift of faith has more faith than the person without the gift of faith, the person with the gift of giving has greater capacity to give than the one without the gift of giving.

Romans 12:6-8

- 6 Since <u>we have GIFTS</u> that differ <u>according to the GRACE given to us</u>, each of us is to <u>exercise them</u> <u>accordingly</u>: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith;
- 7 if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching;
- 8 or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; <u>he who gives, with LIBERALITY</u>; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

Paul here exhorts us to use these gifts according to the grace given to us. The phrase 'exercise them accordingly' in verse 6, means that we ought to use/operate in these gifts according to the measure of God's grace that He has given for this specific operation. For some of these gifts, Paul describes the spirit of

LIBERALITY, underpinned by purity of motive, must characterize the grace gift of giving.

grace in which the gift should operate, e.g. the gift of prophecy should be functional in accordance with the measure of faith the person has; cheerfulness must characterise the operation of the gift of mercy, etc. In terms of the gift of giving, LIBERALITY must characterise the grace gift of giving. As previously stated, grace flows freely and effortlessly and is lavish in expressions. The Grace GIFT of giving must be exercised with liberality.

In this specific verse, the word, liberality does not mean simply mean bountifulness. The Greek word is 'haplotes'

Liberality = haplotes	=	(from haplous – not having an ulterior or double motive)
	=	Simplicity, purity, sincerity, faithfulness, plenitude (completeness, fullness) ⁸⁴
	=	singleness, mental honesty ⁸⁵
	=	the virtue of one who is free from pretense and hypocrisy ⁸⁶

= not self-seeking, openness of heart manifesting itself by generosity⁸⁷

It refers to faithful acts of kindness in giving arising out of a proper motivation. It does contain the element of bountifulness and generous giving, but stresses that this must emanate from a sincere and pure motivation with no hidden motive.

Concluding Thought:

"If giving has the capacity for you to share in the grace of your spiritual father and also unlocks the ALL or MANIFOLD grace of God, then it is safe to conclude that the gift of giving is the only gift that will unlock grace for functioning in the other gifts, all which flow from grace". [Andy Chetty]

May you stand complete in the grace of giving!

Summation of

'Accessing Grace Through The Grace of Giving' Principles

- 1. Financial offerings given to one's spiritual father in the Lord is an important avenue for accessing grace.
- 2. Giving financially or materially to your spiritual father is one of the most tangible ways you express your honour and commitment to him.
- 3. Those who sow into your life spiritually should reap from you materially.
- 4. Those who labour with sincere diligence, not being slothful in the execution of their divine assignment as preachers and teachers of the Word, are deserving of double honour and high esteem which is manifested or expressed in financial or material terms.
- 5. When we give financially, we acknowledge and give honour to our set men and other elders who labour diligently in preaching and teaching (doctrine). We are actually acknowledging and esteeming the grace of God in them that is being manifested through them.
- 6. When you minister financially or practically to the needs of the one who nourishes you spiritually through the Word of the Lord, you are actually honouring Christ in the individual.
- 7. In honouring the grace of God in the person, by sowing financially into his life, you become the beneficiary or recipient of God's grace given to that person to steward.
- 8. The financial and material gifts given to an apostolic spiritual fathering resource has an effect upon God in the heavens, producing a sweet aroma that ascends to Him. This proves that financial giving is also an expression of worship.
- 9. Your giving to your spiritual father has a significant bearing on the degree to which your needs will be supplied.
- 10. Financial giving itself is a GRACE.
- 11. You will never attain perfection in the area of giving until you function completely in the GRACE of GIVING.
- 12. Indications of incomplete financial grace are :
 - a. Not being Completely GIVEN to the Lord
 - b. Not being GIVEN to your Spiritual Leader
 - c. Not desiring to give
 - d. Not actually giving : covetousness
- 13. When we fail to give, we prove deficient in the grace of giving, and also provide very clear evidence that we have not been personally completely GIVEN to the Lord.

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- 14. Failure to give financially to one's spiritual father is rooted in a failure to be completely GIVEN personally to him as a servant of the Lord.
- 15. Many have incomplete financial grace because of a fundamental failure to regard THE LORD in the persons that function as their spiritual fathers or set men.
- 16. A sure indication of an absence of the grace of giving is the lack of desire to actually give.
- 17. The claim by anyone to be complete in the area of the grace of giving is not valid unless the person in his/her financial and material giving does not know how to inconvenience themselves in order to convenience others. Grace gives! Not to give because of a covetousness spirit, is disgrace!
- 18. When you give to your spiritual father and thereby become a partaker of his grace, you are also given ALL GRACE from the God of ALL GRACE.
- 19. To the measure that you sow, you will reap. But if you have sown financially, you will not only reap financially in proportion to that which you have sown, but you will also reap non-monetary blessings as well.
- 20. God gives you abundant overflowing grace that in all things, at all times you will overflow or abound in every good work.
- 21. The level of abundance promised to the giver will be manifested not just materially or financially but will also characterise one's operation in and execution of the will of the Lord for your life generally.
- 22. If you excel in the GRACE of giving, then God is able to make ALL GRACE abound to you.
- 23. In terms of the gift of giving, LIBERALITY must characterise the grace gift of giving.
- 24. The grace gift of giving refers to faithful acts of kindness in giving arising out of a sincere and pure motivation.

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Accessing Grace Through The Grace of Giving

Questions and Issues for Personal Review and Group Discussion

- 1. Honouring your spiritual father in the Lord and other ministers from whom your derive spiritual benefit in a financial way is biblical. Discuss in what respects is a financial gift depictive of one's disposition of respect and honour for an individual who nourishes and sustains you with spiritual truth.
- 2. Review Acts 28:6-10 in reference to point one above.
- 3. The degree to which the Philippian believers partnered with Paul as their apostolic resource was a vital factor in them 'partaking of grace' with him. Thoroughly explore this dynamic and validate the biblical soundness of this principle.
- 4. Financial giving itself is a 'grace'. What does this mean?
- 5. At least four indicators highlight the fact that an individual is not thoroughly perfected or complete in the grace of giving. Explore these four factors highlight just how serious they are in preventing the church from coming to a more perfected state in the area of financial giving.
- 6. What is the biblical correlation between financial gifts to one apostolic fathering oversight, and the 'ALL GRACE' of God?
- 7. 2 Corinthians 9:8 is an iconic passage highlighting a significant all-encompassing benefit that comes to one who gives financially. Decode this blessing completely.
- 8. All believers are expected to excel in giving, yet some have a distinct supernatural ability to give financially far above what would be considered ordinary or even lavish. This gift of financial giving is one of seven gifts of grace mentioned in Romans 12. The giving of a person, who has the gift of giving, is to be characterized by a very clearly indicated trait. What is it and what does it fully encompass?

Personal Notes on 'Go	d's Kingdom Ec	, onomy	

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First Fruits

Honour the LORD ... with the best part of everything. Prov. 3:9 (NLT)

First Fruits is one of the most powerful expressions of giving in Scripture. It is probably the first kind of offering recorded in the Bible. Abel, without any external command from God, offered the firstlings of his flocks to God. Thus first fruit offerings in essence is the **foundation of all other offerings**. It was practiced many years before the practice of the giving of tithes. The first recorded giving of the tithe was Abraham's tithe to Melchisedek in Genesis 14, whereas Genesis 4 records the first example of the giving of first fruits.



Genesis 4:2b-5

- 2b And Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.
- 3 So it came about in the course of time that <u>Cain brought an offering</u> to the Lord of the fruit of the ground.
- 4 Abel, on his part also brought of the **<u>FIRSTLINGS</u>** of his flock **<u>and of their fat portions</u>**. And the <u>**Lord had**</u> **<u>regard for Abel AND for his offering</u>;**
- 5 but <u>for Cain and for his offering</u> He had **no regard**. So Cain became **very angry and his countenance fell**.

Both the tithe and the first fruit were practiced many years before the Law was given through Moses. Both kinds of giving were then entrenched within the law and found unique expression under the New Covenant. We deal with Abel's first fruit offering in more detail later in this chapter.

WHAT ARE FIRST FRUITS ?

First fruits refer to the first weekly income or profit, or financial fruit received within a specific category, within a specific calendar year. Three different Hebrew words indicate 'first fruit'. The two primary words are '**bikkur'/'bikkûriym'** and '**reshityth'** (translated '**choice'**). '**Bikkur'** means 'first fruit, first-ripe fruit or hasty fruit'⁸⁸. 'Reshityth means "the first in time, place, order or rank: the beginning, the chief, the first part, or principle thing."⁸⁹ The third word, although not strictly translated as first fruit, can at times infer it. This word is '**terumah'**, which also generally refers to any

(Lev.27:26;Num. 3:13)

(Lev. 19:22-25) (Num. 15:20,21)

(Prov. 3:8,9)

kind of offering including special tribute offerings, wave offerings, heave offerings, etc. ⁹⁰

First fruits refer to anything born, ripened or produced first. It was regarded as holy unto the Lord.

Examples :

*	The firstborn of man and animals
*	The first produce of the vineyard
*	The first coarse meal

- The first of any kind of 'increase' or wealth acquisition
- The first annual production of grain, wine, oil, sheared wool, honey and all the produce of the land (Ex 23:16; 34:22; Deut. 18:4; 2 Chron. 31:5)

So then, first fruits included the yearly first gathering of the ripened produce of the land in honour of the fact that both the land and its produce belonged to the Lord. The produce was presented (Ex. 23:16, 19) to the Lord in its harvested state or, in the case of some items, when the product had been properly prepared.

Generally, first fruit offerings were in themselves indicative and representative of the entire harvest to follow. A modern day equivalent of this practice would be to offer the first weekly income/profit or financial fruit/harvest received within a specific category, within a specific calendar year. Suggested contemporary applications of the first fruit offerings are discussed later in this chapter.

Annually, Israel celebrated seven feasts, which are generally classified into three broad feasts, viz. Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles. Here is a tabular summary of these feasts:

Month	Feast	Scripture	Broad Categorization	Product
1 st month	 Feast of Passover Feast of Unleavened Bread Feast of Sheaf of First Fruit 	Lev. 23:4-5 Lev. 23:6-8 Lev. 23:9-14	Feast of Passover	Barley (Corn/Grain harvest)
3 rd month	 4. Feast of Weeks Also known as: Harvest (Ex 23:16);Day of First fruits (Num 28:26; Ex 34:22); Weeks of the Firstfruit of the Wheat Harvest (Ex 34:22) ; First fruit of Israel's labours (Ex 23:16); Pentecost (Acts 2:1; 20:16; 1 Cor 16:8) 	Lev. 23:15-22	Feast of Pentecost	Wheat (Corn/Grain Harvest)
7 th month	 5. Feast of Trumpets 6. Feast of Day of Atonement 7. Feast of Tabernacles Also called: Ingathering (Ex 23:16);Solemn Feast (Deut. 16:15); Seventh Month (Neh.8:14); Booths (Neh.8:14-15) 	Lev. 23:23-25 Lev. 23:26-32 Lev. 23:33-34	Feast of Tabernacles	Oil & Wine (Fruit Harvest)

First fruits were offered during these feasts. In the Passover Feast, the first sheaf (called the Sheaf of First fruits) of a ripened and ready to be reaped barley and wheat harvest was given to the priest, who waved it in his house - before the Lord, as a sign of the coming and fuller harvests in 'Pentecost' and 'Tabernacles'. The first fruit offered in 'Pentecost' would indicate the quality of the harvest that would come in 'Tabernacles'. The 'sheaf of first fruit' was essentially the **'FIRST of the first fruit'**.

Exodus 23:19 The first of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the LORD thy God. (KJV)

The phrase 'first of the first fruits' suggests the first of a series of first fruit offerings to be given. Since the sheaf symbolically is representative of people (Gen.37:5-11), these first fruit offerings, as is the case with any offering to the Lord, are symbolically indicative of the totality and the entirety of one's life and spiritual destiny. Seven weeks, or more exactly fifty days after the **Feast of Sheaf of First Fruits** (part of **Passover**),

harvest. These were given to the priest who would wave them before the Lord. In the **Feast of Tabernacles**, first fruits of the oil and wine (vintage) were offered as well. The following scripture indicates that in all seasons of any kind of increase or harvest, first fruits were to be offered.

First fruits were symbolic as a sign of the coming and fuller harvests.

Numbers 18:12,13a

- 12 "<u>All the best</u> of the <u>fresh oil</u> and all <u>the best</u> of the <u>fresh wine</u> and of <u>the grain</u>, the first fruits of those which they <u>give to the Lord</u>, I give them to you (*i.e. the priest*)
- 13a "The first ripe fruits of ALL that is in their land, ...

At no stage was Israel to come before the Lord EMPTY-HANDED

Exodus 23:14-19

- 14 "<u>Three times a year</u> you shall celebrate a feast to Me.
- 15 "You shall observe the <u>Feast of Unleavened Bread</u> (*i.e. Feast of Passover*); for seven days you are to eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the appointed time in the month Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt. <u>And none shall appear before Me empty-handed</u>.
- 16 "Also you shall observe the Feast of the Harvest (i.e. Feast of Pentecost) of the first fruits of your labors from what you sow in the field; also the Feast of the Ingathering (Feast of Tabernacles) at the end of the year when you gather in the fruit of your labors from the field.
- 17 "Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord God.
- 18 "You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leavened bread; nor is the fat of My feast to remain overnight until morning.
- 19 "You shall bring the choice first fruits of your soil into the house of the Lord your God. "You are not to boil a young goat in the milk of its mother.

In all three feasts, note that no one was to appear before the Lord '<u>EMPTY-HANDED'.</u> Appearing 'emptyhanded' would be suggestive of the fact that God did not bless you. The fact that they are commanded to appear 'full-handed' means that God's blessings was presupposed if they were obedient.

THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE FIRSTFRUIT

Note in Exodus 23:19 quoted above, as in Exodus 34:26, it says the following :

"You shall bring the choice first fruits of your soil into the house of the Lord your God. "You are not to boil a young goat in the milk of its mother.

[See also Deut.14:21]

Note the command to give the first fruit to God, is further accentuated by a command not to boil a young goat in the milk of its mother. In reference to observing first fruit offerings, this may mean the following:

 Milk is that commodity that provides nourishment to a new young goat. Milk must not be used to boil or kill the goat. There is an implicit warning not to misuse the intention of a thing, i.e. if milk is intended for the provision of nourishment and thus life, then it must not be used as a medium to

More Excellent Giving; Copyright © 2012 Randolph Barnwell. Reproduction in any form is permissible, provided that no monetary profit is gained. [Email: randolph@eternalsound.co.za; rbarnwell@mweb.co.za; Website: www.randolphbarnwell.com; Telephone: (+27) 83 2729 579] facilitate death. Milk, a source of great nourishment, nutrition and immunisation against disease and illness, especially in infants, is in this context of being boiled, now misused, and this misuse results in death. Symbolically applied to first fruit giving, the first fruit must not be abused or misused. Do not destroy or eat your first fruit yourself. Doing so will lead to death in terms of you not experiencing God's intended level of perpetual and sustained blessing on your life. The practice of giving first fruits, intended for blessing, sustenance, provision, immunisation from economic famine, etc., can, if misdirected, abused or misused, result in the nullification of the very thing it was designed for.

"It was a custom of the ancient heathens, when they had gathered in all their fruits, to take a kid and boil it in the milk of its dam (mother); and then, in a magical way, to go about and sprinkle with it all their trees and fields, gardens and orchards; thinking that by these means to make them fruitful, that they might bring forth more abundantly in the following year." [Dr Cudworth]⁹¹

Heathen nations, after boiling a young goat in the milk of its mother, would sprinkle the milk on all of their trees, believing that by this magical practice the trees would then produce a bountiful future harvest. This was their evil way of ensuring that their future harvest would be guaranteed. So God, in giving an instruction to Israel to give Him the first young goat (and not to boil it as would the heathen nations), was signaling to His people not to place their trust in the realm of the demonic to ensure a blessing on their land, but rather by their offering of the first fruits to Him, they actively display their acknowledgement and utter dependence on Him to secure for them a bountiful future harvest.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF 'FIRST'

TIMING – 'NO DELAY'

Exodus 22:29,30"You shall not delay the offering from your harvest and your vintage. The firstborn of your
sons you shall give to Me. "You shall do the same with your oxen and with your sheep. It
shall be with its mother seven days; on the eighth day you shall give it to Me.

Delay = 'ahar' (achar) = to hesitate, tarry, defer, to hold back, to come too late⁹²

The word 'first' highlights the importance of TIMING. God wants the 'first' – not the 'second' or 'third'. The first fruit offering was not to be 'delayed', i.e. timing is essential as it represents the EARLIEST, RIPEST fruit – the first produce in a cycle or season of time where the land was worked. You cannot offer 'later' that which should have been 'first'. This is not to say that one should be legalistic about which month first fruits should be offered. You can determine what your first fruit

month will be in a specific calendar year. Whatever period of time represents your calendar year, ensure that in the start of that period, you give to the Lord your first fruit offering. The word 'first' highlights the importance of TIMING. God wants the 'first' – not the 'second' or 'third'.

Hezekiah authoritatively called for first fruits and tithes to be given.

2 Chronicles 31:4-5 HE COMMANDED THE PEOPLE who lived in Jerusalem to give the portion due to the priests and the Levites, that they might devote themselves to the law of the Lord. AS SOON AS THE ORDER SPREAD, the sons of Israel provided in abundance the first fruits of grain, new wine, oil, honey and of all the produce of the field; and they brought in abundantly the tithe of all.

Note, **AS SOON AS THE ORDER WAS GIVEN,** there was an immediate and instantaneous response of obedience from the people. It is important that first fruits be given timeously – obedience to this principle must not be delayed nor postponed.

At the Feast of Pentecost, when the first ripened wheat was brought, it was brought on a specific DAY called the **DAY OF FIRST FRUIT.**

Numbers 28:26'Also on the day of the first fruits, when you present a new grain offering to the Lord in
your Feast of Weeks, you shall have a holy convocation; you shall do no laborious work.

In our modern day in some circles, a specific day is set aside for the reception of first fruit offerings, usually within the first four or five weeks of a specific calendar year.

THE 'CHOICE' FRUITS

Exodus 23:19"You shall bring the choice first fruits of your soil into the house of the Lord your G"You are not to boil a young goat in the milk of its mother.

The Hebrew word translated as 'first' in the term 'first fruit' is 'resiyt'. The word 'choice' is also 'resiyt' in the Hebrew.

Choice / first =	resiyt =	[Pronounced 'ray-sheeth' ⁹³]
		The beginning, the first, the chief, the best, the first fruits.
		Denotes the point in time or space at which something started.
		Signifies the highest of anything, i.e., the best or most excellent, such as
		the choicest parts of offerings .
		Designates the earliest or first products or results of something.
		It refers many times to the first products of a harvest. ⁹⁴

The significance of this word 'first' is seen in the creation account in Genesis

Genesis 1:1a states that "In the **beginning** God made the". The word 'beginning' is the Hebrew word 'resiyt'. The act of creation was the initiation of a series of events, all resulting from the initial creative act. The giving of first fruits sets forth the initial act which is the first of a whole series of other expressions and acts of giving , and activates the reaping of tremendous blessings and rewards.

The foundation of a life of giving and thus blessing is first fruits.

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The word 'resiyt' is also used in the sense of setting forth a foundation.

Psalm 111:10 says, "*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*", i.e. the foundation or entry point into wisdom is the fear the Lord. Similarly, the foundation of a life of giving and thus blessing is the offering of first fruits. It sets forth a solid foundation in one's life of abundant giving. Anything built without a good foundation will not last. First fruit giving is radical and testifies to one's utter dependence and acknowledgement of God as the only source of your supply and bounty.

THE FIRST LEAVENS THE REST

Romans 11:16 (a)NKJVFor if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy;NASVIf the first piece of dough is holy, the lump is also;

Whatever quality the first fruit is, the rest of the fruit will be likewise. The quality of the first piece of dough affects the quality of the rest of the lump of dough. The 'first' sets the pattern for the 'rest' – the first is the catalyst that affects everything subsequent to it. If we seek FIRST the kingdom and His righteousness, all things will be added to us (Matthew 6:33). That which you do and seek FIRST will affect what THINGS will be added. Giving our first fruit to the Lord is a violent and radical demonstration of just how much we esteem and honour God and prioritise His Kingdom.

CHRIST, THE FIRST FRUIT OF THOSE WHO HAVE DIED

1 Corinthians 15:20-26

- 20 But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the **<u>first fruits</u> of those who are asleep**.
- 21 For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead.
- 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.
- 23 But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming,
- 24 then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power.
- 25 For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.
- 26 The last enemy that will be abolished is death.

Three Points Here:

1. All spiritual activity must have a Christo-centric focus. The giving of first fruits bears prophetic significance of the master plan of God in raising Jesus from the dead as the first in a series or harvest of sons that would follow in this same pattern. Within the giving of the first fruit, is representative of everything else

Christ is the ultimate expression of the principle of First fruits.

that is to follow. Christ became the first person to be raised from the dead, having conquered the power and authority of death, and never to die again. 1 Cor. 15:23 above indicates that in the order of things, Christ had to be raised first, and after this, all those who are in Christ will be raised. All those IN Christ will be or ARE raised at the time that He is raised!

In His resurrection, it is not just Him that is raised, but He is prefiguring a prophetic pattern that all those who are IN Him, who have died, will also be raised from the dead one day. He is the first fruit from the dead – the first fruit of all those to come who shall be raised. **So the principle of first**

fruits indicates that IN that which is given, is everything else that will follow in the same pattern. So when I give my first fruits to my spiritual father, I am prophetically giving literally everything I have or will subsequently have. It is a prophetic picture of the totality of all that the original first fruit represents.

- 2. Embedded in the idea that Christ has become the first fruit of all those who have died, is that HE became the first to be raised, indicative of a huge harvest of others in Him that will also be raised. The whole idea of first fruits is that it is not the first and last offering, but it is the first of many and more to come. It signifies a hope of a much greater future harvest.
- 3. 1 COR 15:24-26 describes the resultant effect produced because of Jesus becoming the first fruit, and thus all those who are in Him enter into the same experience as Him in being raised from the dead. Christ will abolish all rule and authority, having completely subjected death, the last enemy, and then hand over the kingdom to His Father. Thus a set of events are set in motion, bringing completion and finality to the will of God. This is what the power of first fruit offering releases every time it is done. It symbolically acts as a catalyst in bringing to finish or closure specific aspects of the purposes of God in our lives.

<u>Revelations 1:5 (a)</u> Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the **firstborn** of the dead

SEEKING FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Matthew 6: 33 "But seek FIRST His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Convincing John that he needed to baptise Him, Jesus said that it must be so in order for him to **FULFILL ALL RIGHTEOUSNESS**. Similarly, the restoration and practice of first fruits to the Body of Christ is going to bring about a fulfillment and completeness to practical righteousness. It then becomes a tangible demonstration

The giving of first fruits must be indicative of the fact that we seek God's Kingdom and His righteousness FIRST. that God and His kingdom are truly FIRST in our lives. The observance of the practice of first fruit giving must be done within the general context and conviction of the fact that you seek FIRST the Kingdom of God. First fruits presently is one manifestation of the general principles of 'first things'. Jesus chided the Pharisees and Scribes for giving tithes, yet neglecting the weightier matters of the law and justice. Their failure to prioritise God in those critical areas

invalidated the giving of their tithes. The giving of first fruits must be indicative of the fact that we seek God's Kingdom and His righteousness FIRST – that our entire lives, thoughts, actions, decisions, etc. are completely submitted to God's principles and way of doing things. First fruit giving, when practiced from this foundation and context, then becomes meaningful, acceptable and releases the fullness of all the blessing and power inherent within it.

Note the context in which Matthew 6: 33 is located:

Matthew 6:25-34

- 25 "For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?
- 26 "Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?

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- 27 "And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life?
- 28 "And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin,
- 29 yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these.
- 30 "But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith!
- 31 "Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?'
- 32 "For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.
- 33 "But seek <u>first His kingdom and His righteousness</u>, and all these things will be added to you.
- 34 "So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

In seeking the Kingdom FIRST, Jesus is teaching us how to handle anxiety caused through worrying about our basic needs. When we desire to seek the kingdom FIRST in reference to our finances, and thus embrace the practice of giving first fruits as part of our general overall commitment to placing God and His will FIRST in all we do, then we have positioned ourselves strategically to live free from anxiety over whether or not our needs will be taken care of.

A DISTINCTION BETWEEN FIRST FRUITS, TITHES AND OFFERINGS

For many years, many believers considered 'first fruits and the 'tithe' as referring to one and the same thing, yet they are distinct and separate entities and expressions of giving to the Lord. Note the following Scriptures which clearly delineate between 'First Fruits' on the one hand and 'Tithes' on the other.

Deuteronomy 26

- 1 "Then it shall be, when you enter the land which the Lord your God gives you as an inheritance, and you possess it and live in it,
- 2 that you shall <u>take some of the first of all the produce</u> of the ground which you bring in from your land that the Lord your God gives you, and you shall put it in a basket and go <u>to the place where the Lord your God</u> <u>chooses to establish His name</u>.
- 3 "You shall go <u>to the priest</u> who is <u>in office at that</u> time and say to him, 'I declare this day to the Lord my God that <u>I have entered the land</u> which the Lord swore to our fathers to give us.'
- 4 "Then the **priest shall take** the basket from your hand and set it down before the altar of the Lord your God.
- 5 "You shall answer and say before the Lord your God, 'My father was a wandering Aramean, and he went down to Egypt and sojourned there, few in number; but there he became a great, mighty and populous nation.
- 6 'And the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, and imposed hard labor on us.
- 7 'Then we cried to the Lord, the God of our fathers, and the Lord heard our voice and saw our affliction and our toil and our oppression;
- 8 and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and with great terror and with signs and wonders;
- 9 and He has brought us to this place and has given us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey.
- 10 'Now behold, <u>I have brought the first of the produce of the ground which You, O Lord have given me.</u>' And you shall set it down before the Lord your God, <u>and worship before the Lord your God;</u>
- 11 <u>and you and the Levite and the alien</u> who is among you <u>shall rejoice in all the good which the Lord your God</u> <u>has given you and your household.</u>
- 12 "When you have finished paying <u>all the tithe of your increase</u> in the <u>third year</u>, <u>the year of tithing</u>, then you shall <u>give it to the Levite</u>, to the stranger, to the orphan and to the widow, that they may eat in your towns and be satisfied.

- 13 "You shall say before the Lord your God, '<u>I have removed the sacred portion</u> from my house, and also have given it to the Levite and the alien, the orphan and the widow, according to all Your commandments which You have commanded me; <u>I have not transgressed or forgotten any of Your commandments.</u>
- 14 'I have not eaten of it while mourning, nor have I removed any of it while I was unclean, nor offered any of it to the dead. <u>I have listened to the voice of the Lord my God; I have done according to all that You have</u> <u>commanded me</u>.
- 15 **'Look down from Your holy habitation**, from heaven, and **bless Your people** Israel, and **the ground which** You have given us, a land flowing with milk and honey, as You swore to our fathers.'
- 16 "This day the Lord your God commands you to do these statutes and ordinances. You shall therefore <u>be</u> <u>careful to do them with all your heart and with all your soul</u>.
- 17 "You have today declared the Lord to be your God, and that you would <u>walk in His ways</u> and <u>keep His</u> <u>statutes, His commandments and His ordinances, and listen to His voice</u>.
- 18 "The Lord has today declared you to be His people, a treasured possession, as He promised you, and that you should keep all His commandments;
- 19 and that He will set you <u>high above all nations</u> which He has made, for praise, fame, and honor; and that you shall be a consecrated people to the Lord your God, as He has spoken."

2 Chronicles 31:3-6

- 3 He also appointed the king's portion of his goods for the burnt offerings, namely, for the morning and evening burnt offerings, and the burnt offerings for the sabbaths and for the new moons and for the fixed festivals, as it is written in the law of the Lord.
- 4 Also he commanded the people who lived in Jerusalem <u>to give the portion due to the priests and the</u> <u>Levites</u>, that <u>they might devote themselves to the law of the L</u>ord.
- <u>As soon as</u> the order spread, the <u>SONS</u> of Israel provided in abundance the <u>FIRST FRUITS</u> of grain, new wine, oil, honey and of all the produce of the field; and they brought in abundantly the <u>TITHE</u> OF ALL.
- 6 **<u>The SONS</u>** of Israel and Judah who lived in the cities of Judah also brought in the tithe of oxen and sheep, and the tithe of sacred gifts which were consecrated to the Lord their God, and placed them in heaps.

Nehemiah 10:39

We will also bring <u>THE FIRST</u> of our dough, our contributions, the fruit of every tree, the new wine and the oil to the priests at the chambers of the house of our God, <u>AND THE TITHE</u> of our ground to the Levites, for the Levites are they who receive the tithes in all the rural towns.

The tithe refers to the regular and systematic giving of a tenth, or ten percent of one's gross weekly or monthly income or profit. The calculation of the tithe is easy – it is simply ten percent of your gross income for a specified time period. The tithe is given recurrently whenever an income or a financial gift is received – it is ongoing so long as you are in receipt of some financial blessing. "You do not need a revelation as to how much you should tithe – all you need is a calculator."⁹⁵ (Thamo Naidoo).

Apostle Frans Du Plessis notes interesting differences between first fruits and tithes⁹⁶. He explains ...

Yes, the giving of the first to God always determines what would happen to the rest. The difference between tithing and the giving of the first fruit is the following:

- With tithing you wait for the full harvest and then calculate how much the tithe will be.
- Therefore tithing is at the end of the year after the harvest has come in.
- After giving the Lord's tithe you still have 90% left over for yourself.

This is not so with the firstling, first born or first-fruits offering.

- When the first-fruits are ripening on the tree, or the firstborn of animals is given to God, it not only your first but also your 'only'.
- After you have given it there is nothing left it is your 100%.

• You have no natural evidence that the full harvest would come in or that others would be born from the same womb.

Although the tithe is always more than the first fruits in quantity, the first-fruits are the most holy offering. It takes much more faith, love and commitment to give first-fruits than tithing.

"When you tithe, you give out of your past; when you give first fruits, you give into your future" Thamo Naidoo [Finance Seminar - 'More Excellent Ministry of Giving' - 2008]

'MORE EXCELLENT' GIVING

Genesis 4:4-5

- 4 Abel, on his part also brought of the <u>FIRSTLINGS</u> of his flock and of their fat portions. And the <u>Lord had</u> regard for Abel AND for his offering;
- 5 but <u>for Cain and for his offering</u> He had **no regard**. So Cain became **very angry and his countenance fell**.

Hebrews 11:4By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through(NKJV)which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it
he being dead still speaks

Abel offered a first fruit offering comprising of the firstlings of all his flock. The writer of the book of Hebrews describes this offering as God having high 'regard' for it as a 'more excellent'(NKJV) or 'better' (NASB) sacrifice.

The restoration of the practice of first fruits to the church will bring 'excellence' to our giving.

Proverbs 22:20 Have I not written to you excellent things of counsels and knowledge

Proverbs 22:20 speaks of '<u>excellent things'</u>, which in the Hebrew ('saliys'), literally meaning 'three' or 'third part', or 'a triangle' - thus implying <u>'threefold things'</u>.⁹⁷

We, with a 'better covenant', enacted on 'better promises' have been called to a <u>'more excellent'</u> ministry.

Hebrews 8:6But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a
better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises.

'Excellent' = diaphoros = surpassing⁹⁸, different, divers, superior⁹⁹

'More excellent' giving will include ...

- * First Fruits
- * Tithes
- * Offerings

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Nehemiah 12:44 (a)

On that day men were also appointed over the chambers for the stores, **the** <u>contributions</u> <u>(offering)</u>, the first fruits and the tithes, to gather into them from the fields of the cities the portions required by the law <u>for the priests and Levites</u> ...

God, as a person, and His purposes, are usually expressed or worked-out in terms of three-fold dimensions: Examples:

The Godhead	:	Father, Son, Holy Spirit
Constitution of Man	:	Spirit, Soul, Body
Three Patriarchs	:	Abraham, Isaac, Jacob
Tabernacle	:	Outer Court; Holy Place; Holy of Holies
Singing	:	Psalms, Hymns, Spiritual Songs
Feasts	:	Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles
Old Testament Divisions	:	Law, Prophets, Psalms
Three Offices of Christ	:	Prophet, Priest, King
> Jesus	:	Way, Truth, Life
The Kingdom	:	Righteousness, Peace and Joy in the Holy Ghost
Enduring Virtues	:	Faith, Hope, Love
Prayer	:	Ask, Seek, Knock

The number 'three' has tremendous spiritual significance. '**Three' indicates that which is solid, real, substantial, complete and entire**.¹⁰⁰ Christ was raised on the 'third' day. 'Three' draws reference to that which has **a complete, divine or heavenly dimension** built into it.¹⁰¹ This signification is that all things which are divinely patented are stamped with the number three referring to divine perfection and incorruptibility.¹⁰² Likewise, in

'More excellent' giving is 'three-fold' giving of first fruits, tithes and offerings, and is depictive of the 'Divine'.

the area of giving, the truth of first fruits is being restored to the Body of Christ, and this along with 'tithes' and 'offerings', brings fullness and completeness to this facet of our relationship with God. This brings to bear upon our giving a **sense of 'Divine Perfection' as** God brings us to maturity in the area of giving. God is three-fold, viz. Father, Son and Spirit. All that He does has a three-fold dimension to it, including the area of giving.

The word 'First' is generally associated with the 'apostolic'.

<u>1 Cor. 12:28</u> And God has appointed in the church, **<u>FIRST apostles</u>**, second prophets, third teachers

The restoration of the first fruit practice to the church has coincided with the restoration and recognition of apostles to the Body of Christ. Apostles are bent on bringing the purposes of God to completion and restoring all things to the church.

THE DETERMINATION OF THE FIRST FRUIT

Normally, first fruits, in our modern economy, where most individuals are remunerated monthly, represent the first weeks' income/profit and is not usually recurrent within one cycle of a specific calendar year, except in certain incidences. The calculation of the first fruit is not as plain as the tithe, since we have to

Whatever finances is received 'first' in various categories of income or blessing, is considered 'first fruit'. apply what was practiced within the context of a total and complete agrarian economy to our modern monetary based economy. I personally think that the Lord intended this seeming lack of a clear percentage to determine the first fruit amount, to be so, because He intended the first fruits not to be governed by a calculator, but by your heart posture. Whilst an absolute percentage defines the 'tithe', the determination of first fruits is largely governed by what the giver considers 'FIRST' in terms of what income or profit he/she has received. Legalism must not characterise the determination of first fruits, yet at the same token, the determination of the first fruit amount must not be governed by a stingy, frugal or poverty mentality.

Having said that, below are some guidelines and examples, which are not prescriptive, but simply suggestions that will assist to determine the first fruit amount. The suggestions and examples illustrated are gleaned from Apostle Frans Du Plessis' revelation and research into 1^{st} century Jewish writings on the subject of first fruits. For Israel, with the live flock, it was easy, viz. it was every first born out of the womb given to the priests. The harvests worked a little differently. The Priests would come out to the family and estimate the coming harvest at the beginning. They would say it is one-sixtieth (1/60), one-fiftieth (1/50) or one-fortieth (1/40) of the total potential crop that a specific field or lot would yield. One-fortieth would be greatest and one-sixtieth the least. Here below is an extract from Apostle Frans Du Plessis' teaching notes on 'First Fruits'¹⁰³:

[Note 'Terumah' here is the Hebrew reference to 'first fruits']

<u>**Rabbis**</u> measured a whole lot of fields and determined that between **1/40** & **1/60**th of a crop came up first – this was determined as being the firstfruits. As Israel moved from agricultural to vocational people they asked "how can we honour Terumah with our wages? Rabbis answered – between $1/40^{th}$ & $1/60^{th}$ of gross income

BUT $1/40^{th}$ is better than $1/60^{th}$. This equates to 2 ½ % & 1 ½% of annual income respectively. In today's terms, this would be one week's salary or 2% of your annual gross income in the first month.

The Mishnah – written about 180AD

This is partly Rabbinical law and partly rabbinical commentary on the OT Scriptures. The fourth volume is thick and focused all on Terumah. This indicates that Terumah was still being practiced by Jews beyond Jesus' time on earth. – Hence it would have been "standard practice" during His time on earth.

<u>**Didache**</u> – the teaching of the twelve apostles to the first century church – not the Bible – but reliable writing

Didache 13 – the whole chapter is on the Terumah offering. This was written about 80AD.

Quote from Didache

"If you have a pastor who is willing to live among you and teach you the Word and sow into your spirit, he is worthy of your Terumah. If you don't have a Pastor who is worthy of your Terumah then give your Terumah to the poor. Whatever you do, don't eat the firstfruits."

<u>Hillel</u>, who was in charge of the biggest rabbinical school in Israel, said:- "If a person honours Terumah at $1/40^{th}$ level, his eye is said to be **full of light** – If he honors Terumah at a $1/50^{th}$ level his eye is said to be a **middling eye** – If he honors Terumah at a $1/60^{th}$ level that person has an **evil eye"**. People who didn't pay Terumah at all were called **infidels** – a very serious accusation.

First fruit, in our modern economic context, refers to **the first weekly income or profit received in a specific calendar year**. One of out of 52 weeks in a given calendar year represents 1.92%. In practical terms,

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for working persons, this translates to **approximately 25% of first gross monthly income** or roughly **2%** (1.92%) of annual gross income.

For businesses this translates to approximately 25% of monthly profit or approximately 2% (1.92%) of annual profit. In either case, the bedrock principle of first fruits is simply 'THAT WHICH COMES IN FRIST' (the first week's income or profit). Businesses having legal personality, should observe first fruits and tithes as a 'business'. If and when the owner(s) of the business receive a monthly income, this is their personal income and those individuals should observe the offering of first fruits and tithes in the manner suggested in the paragraph above. Apart from this, the business as a legal PERSON, should give first fruits determined by whatever indication of profit comes in first in a specific calendar or financial year.

Here are two practical examples as suggested applications of the giving of first fruits from monthly income earned by an individual working for an employer¹⁰⁴:

* <u>Example 1</u> :	Income in the first month of your calendar year or cycle				
	Gross Monthly Income of the First Month	=	R 10 000		
	Minus First Fruit (applicable to first month only)	=	<u>R 2500</u>		
	Balance	=	R 7500		
	Minus Tithe (i.e. 10% of R 7500)	=	<u>R 750</u>		
	Final Balance	=	R 6750		
	Thus total amount offered in the first month				
	First Fruit (R 2500) + Tithe (R 750)	=	R 3 250		
* Example 2 :	Income in the first month of your calendar year or o	ycle			
	Gross Monthly Income of the First Month	=	R 7 000		
	Minus First Fruit (applicable to first month only)	=	<u>R 1 750</u>		
	Balance	=	R 5250		
	Minus Tithe (i.e. 10% of R 5 250)	=	<u>R 525</u>		
	Final Balance	=	R 4725		
	Thus total amount offered in the first month				
	First Fruit (R 1750) + Tithe (R 525)	=	R 2275		

The examples above do not take into account <u>'offerings'</u>, which is determined by the giver.
 Chapter Eight in this manual, 'And Offerings', and a chapter in Part Two of this Kingdom Economics Series¹⁰⁵, provide some guidelines on this issue.

WHEN ELSE SHOULD FIRST FRUITS BE OFFERED?

"Honour the Lord with your possessions, and with <u>the first</u> <u>fruits</u> of ALL your <u>increase</u>". The general principle is whatever income represents to you the 'first' or 'earliest' should be given as a first fruit offering. Further to this, one could apply the first fruit offering principle not just to the start of the calendar year, but to whenever one receives the first part of a recurrent income – in a specific category.

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Ezekiel 44:30a

"The first of all the first fruits of EVERY KIND & every contribution OF EVERY KIND, from all your contributions, ...

Here are some **suggested** instances when first fruits should be given; these are not meant to be prescriptive - one must be governed by the spirit of willingness and generosity in giving; the 'Spirit' of giving is greater than the 'law' of giving :

- The first week's wages in a specific calendar year (25% of first monthly salary or 2% of annual income)
- The first week's salary received in a **new** job (25% of first monthly salary or 2% of annual income)
- The first commission received
- The first week's profit made (25% of monthly profit or 2% of annual profit)
- The entire portion of a salary <u>increase</u> in a specific month once off, i.e. the portion of the increment in salary.

2 Chronicles 31:5 And as soon as the commandment came abroad, the children of Israel brought in Abundance the <u>firstfruits</u> of corn, wine, and oil, and honey, and of all the <u>increase</u> of the field; and the tithe of all things brought they in abundantly.

Standard employment contracts have a salary increase clause. This usually applies annually. Every year we receive an increase, which in reference to 2 Chron. 31:5 quoted above, is our new "piece of land" and the first "crop" (or fruit) should go to God! Therefore, in the first month, when we receive the increase we do not tithe off it, **but give the entire amount of the increase to God. From the second month it is then part of our package and we begin to tithe off it.** Proverbs reminds us to "**Honour** the Lord with your possessions and with <u>the first fruits</u> of <u>all</u> your <u>increase</u>" (Prov. 3:8; NKJV)

For example, if in a specific month you are earning R 5000, and you receive an increment of R670, thus giving you a new salary of R5 670, the amount of the increase, i.e. R670 should be given as a first fruit offering in the month in which it is received - **once off** - not every month; 10% of the remaining R5 000, i.e. R 500 should be given as a tithe. In subsequent months, normal tithes (R567) and offerings should be given.

Increase = 'tebuah' = a crop, a harvest, an increase, a revenue.¹⁰⁶ Whilst this word indicates produce or yield from the ground, it also refers to any increase or prosperity in general, e.g. as seen in **Proverbs 14:4**: 'Where no oxen are, the manger is clean, but much revenue comes by the strength of the ox.'

The first of any form of financial receipt within that calendar year (e.g. first honourarium; first financial gift received, etc.), **if that receipt of financial income is perpetual and recurrent**, i.e. there is an anticipation or expectation that there would be future such financial receipts in that calendar year.

WHAT ABOUT GRANTS?

A grant is money given to you for a specific purpose, it is not yours and it is not God's, but belongs to the one that it was intended for. Therefore, you take that amount and give it to the person it is owed to and don't touch it - otherwise that would be theft!

WHAT ABOUT BONUSES AND THIRTEENTH CHEQUES?

When you get your bonus, it is part of your salary package (it is not an increase) and you tithe off it, but this bonus represents a payment in recognition of your contribution by your employer, which in some instances, is not guaranteed, and thus should be regarded as a blessing from the Lord. In determining your first fruit offering, this bonus must therefore also be taken into account.

Consider the following example of a person earning a gross salary of R 1 000 per month, over 12 months, and also receives a bonus in the form of a 13^{th} cheque of R1000. The annual gross salary would therefore be R 13 000 (i.e. R 1000 X 13). If first fruits are calculated as approximately 2 % of gross annual salary, this amounts to R260. R260 is given as first fruits; a tithe (10%) is given off the balance, i.e. 10% of R740 = R74. Thus in total R 334 (R260 first fruits + R74 tithe) is given in the first month. In subsequent months, a tithe of R100 is given every month. In the month in which the bonus is received, a tithe is also given off the bonus amount (R100).

<u>A WORD OF CAUTION</u>: Again it must stressed that one must not get too technical about this matter on the one hand, and yet on the other, there must not be a casual approach to it. I personally know of individuals whose faith is at the level of giving their entire first month's salary as a first fruit offering.

TO WHOM MUST FIRST FRUITS BE GIVEN ?

In the Old Testament, first fruits were given to the high priest. Tithes were given to the Levites.

Num. 18:20-21

- 20 Then the LORD said to Aaron: "You shall have no inheritance in their land, nor shall you have any portion among them; I am your portion and your inheritance among the children of Israel.
- 21 "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.

Deuteronomy 26:2-4

- 2 that you shall <u>take some of the first of all the produce</u> of the ground which you bring in from your land that the Lord your God gives you, and you shall put it in a basket and go <u>to the place where the Lord your God</u> <u>chooses to establish His name</u>.
- <u>3</u> "You shall go <u>to the priest</u> who is <u>in office at that</u> time and say to him, 'I declare this day to the Lord my God that <u>I have entered the land</u> which the Lord swore to our fathers to give us.'
- 4 "Then the **priest shall take** the basket from your hand and set it down before the altar of the Lord your God.
- Leviticus 23:9,10Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'When
you enter the land which I am going to give to you and reap its harvest, then you shall
bring in the sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest to the priest.

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Deuteronomy 18:1-5

- 1 "The Levitical priests, the whole tribe of Levi, shall have no portion or inheritance with Israel; <u>they shall eat</u> <u>the Lord's offerings by fire and His portion</u>.
- 2 "They shall have no inheritance among their countrymen; the Lord is their inheritance, as He promised them.
- 3 "Now <u>THIS SHALL BE THE PRIESTS DUE FROM THE PEOPLE</u>, from those who offer a sacrifice, either an ox or a sheep, of which they shall give to the priest the shoulder and the two cheeks and the stomach.
- 4 "You shall <u>GIVE HIM THE FIRST FRUITS</u> of your grain, your new wine, and your oil, and the first shearing of your sheep.
- 5 "For the Lord your God has chosen him and his sons from all your tribes, to stand and serve in the name of the Lord forever.

Nehemiah 10:35-39

- 35 and that they might <u>bring the first fruits</u> of our ground and <u>the first fruits</u> of all the <u>fruit of every tree</u> to the house of the <u>Lord annually</u>.
- 36 and bring to the house of our God the <u>firstborn</u> of our sons and of our cattle, and the <u>firstborn</u> of our herds and our flocks as it is written in the law, <u>for the priests</u> who are **ministering in the house of our God**.
- 37 We will also bring the <u>first of our dough</u>, our contributions, the fruit of every tree, the new wine and the oil to the priests at the chambers of the house of our God, and the <u>tithe of our ground to the Levites</u>, for the Levites are they who receive the tithes in all the rural towns.
- 38 The priest, the son of Aaron, shall be with the Levites when the Levites receive tithes, and the Levites shall bring up the tenth of the tithes to the house of our God, to the chambers of the storehouse.
- 39 For the sons of Israel and the sons of Levi shall bring the contribution of the grain, the new wine and the oil to the chambers; there are the utensils of the sanctuary, the priests who are ministering, the gatekeepers and the singers. Thus we will not neglect the house of our God.

Nehemiah 12:44

On that day <u>men were also appointed</u> over the <u>chambers for the stores</u>, <u>the contributions (offerings)</u>, <u>the first fruits</u> <u>and the tithes</u>, to gather into them from the fields of the cities the <u>portions required by the law</u> for the <u>priests and</u> <u>Levites</u>; for Judah rejoiced over the priests and Levites <u>who served</u>.

Ezekiel 44:30

"The first of all the <u>first fruits of every kind</u> and every contribution of every kind, from all your contributions, <u>shall be</u> <u>for the priests</u>; <u>you shall also give to the priest the first</u> of your dough to <u>cause a blessing to rest on your house</u>.

Modern Day Application :

First fruits offered to the Lord are actually given to your spiritual father, as a representative of the Lord in your life. The priest would be representative of the set-man or spiritual father; Levites would indicate 'five-fold' elders and other personnel who labour in the house of the Lord to ensure its effective and efficient functioning.

Thus first fruits offered to the Lord are actually given to your spiritual father, as a representative priest of the Lord in your life. Many have problems with giving their first fruit to their spiritual

father, yet if they were living in ancient Israel, they would have had to comply with this command. Much of the difficulty that many have today with giving their first fruit to their spiritual father has to do with their inability to regard their spiritual father as a representative of the Lord – refer to my study manual on spiritual fathering and sonship. First fruits are not to be given to the 'Church' as an institution, but to the person whom God has called to be the primary grace that provides spiritual covering and nourishment to you.

More Excellent Giving; Copyright © 2012 Randolph Barnwell. Reproduction in any form is permissible, provided that no monetary profit is gained. [Email: <u>randolph@eternalsound.co.za</u>; rbarnwell@mweb.co.za; Website: <u>www.randolphbarnwell.com</u>; Telephone: (+27) 83 2729 579] Israel as a nation was a first fruit representation – Jeremiah 2:3a: "Israel was holiness to the LORD, The firstfruits of His increase."

The Levites eventually replaced the nation of Israel as the first fruit representation.

<u>Num 3:12</u>	"Now behold, I Myself have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of every firstborn who opens the womb among the children of Israel. Therefore the Levites shall be Mine,
<u>Num. 3:41</u>	And you shall take the Levites for Me —I <i>am</i> the LORD— instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel, and the livestock of the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the livestock of
	the children of Israel."
<u>Num. 3:45</u>	"Take the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel, and the livestock of the Levites instead of their livestock. The Levites shall be Mine: Lam the LORD

The Levites, which included the priest in the Old Testament, did not have any land apportioned to them as their inheritance in the land of Canaan (see Numbers 18:20,21). God said that HE is to be their inheritance. But to adequately sustain them so that their basic needs are taken care of, God ordained that the rest of all the tribes in Israel give their first fruit to the high priest and the tithes to the Levites, who also tithed a tithe (10%) of the collected tithe to the high priest.

Paul argued that ministers of God who dispense of spiritual things should also reap material things.

- 7 Who at any time serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat the fruit of it? Or who tends a flock and does not use the milk of the flock?
- 8 I am not speaking these things according to human judgment, am I? Or does not the Law also say these things?
- 9 For it is written in the Law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing." God is not concerned about oxen, is He?
- 10 Or is <u>He speaking</u> altogether <u>for our sake</u>? Yes, for our sake it was written, because the <u>plowman ought to plow in</u> hope, and **the thresher** to thresh in hope <u>of sharing the crops.</u>
- 11 If we <u>sowed spiritual things</u> in you, is it too much if we <u>reap material things from you?</u>
- 12 If others share the right over you, do we not more? Nevertheless, we did not use <u>this right</u>, but we endure all things so that we will cause <u>no hindrance to the gospel of Christ</u>.
- 13 Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat the food of the temple, and those who <u>attend</u> regularly to the altar have their share from the altar?
- 14 So also the Lord directed **those who proclaim the gospel** to get their **living from the gospel**.
- 15 **But I have used none of these things.** And I am not writing these things so that it will be done so in my case; for it would be better for me to die than have any man make my boast an empty one.

Paul did not insist upon this right with the Corinthian church for various reasons, but nevertheless made the point that it is a right (verse 12). Set men or spiritual fathers, whether in full-time employment in the church or not, should receive the first fruit from those to whom they provide spiritual oversight, covering and nourishment. Paul re-echoes this sentiment in <u>Galatians 6:6</u> : "Let him who receives instruction in the Word [of God] share all good things with his teacher [contributing to his support]" – Amplified Bible. The financial standing of the person receiving the first fruit is not taken into account at all. The observance of

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b tends a flock andThe present financialjudgment, am I? Orstanding of the set-manmuzzle the ox whilenot determine whether or

not you should offer him/her your first fruit.

The at any time serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a

the biblical principle is what is important. Note the following Scripture:

Deut 18:3-8

- 3 "These are the parts the priests may claim as their share from the oxen and sheep that the people bring as offerings: the shoulder, the cheeks, and the stomach.
- 4 You must also give to the priests the first share of the grain, the new wine, the olive oil, and the wool at shearing time.
- 5 For the Lord your God chose the tribe of Levi out of all your tribes to minister in the Lord's name forever.
- 6 "Any Levite who so desires may come from any town in Israel, from wherever he is living, to the place the Lord chooses.
- 7 He may minister there in the name of the Lord his God, just like his fellow Levites who are serving the Lord there.
- 8 He may eat his share of the sacrifices and offerings, EVEN IF HE HAS A PRIVATE SOURCE OF INCOME

The principle is clear : The present financial standing of the spiritual father does not determine whether or not you should offer him/her your first fruit. Honour the principle irrespective of his/her financial standing. Be faithful to be governed by biblical principle and not by your perception about the financial position of your spiritual father. After the defeat of the Midianites in Numbers 31, Moses commanded that the spoil or booty be collected, that half be given to the soldiers and half to the people. Of the half given to the people, one in 50 of every item collected was to be given to the Levites. Of the half given to the soldiers, one in 500 of every item collected was to be given to Eleazar the priest - i.e. to him personally – this was his.

<u>Numbers 31:41</u> Moses gave the levy which was the <u>Lord's offering</u> to <u>Eleazar the priest</u>, just as the Lord had commanded Moses.

<u>Note the Principle</u>: The phrase **"the Lord's offering to Eleazar",** indicate to us that offerings given to your spiritual father are essentially given to the Lord.

			•		*
		Half to	1 in 500 given	Half to the	1 in 50 given to
Item of Booty	Total Collected	Soldiers	to Eleazar the	People	the Levites
			Priest		(Tribe of Levi)
Sheep	675 000	337 500	675	337 500	6 750
Beeves	72 000	36 000	72	36 000	720
Asses	61 000	30 500	61	30 500	610
Persons	32 000	16 000	32	16 000	320

To appreciate just how much Eleazar personally received, study the following table:

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If you have an accurate, committed and sincere spiritual leader/father, a 'set-man' over your life that serves you well and takes his/her role as your spiritual oversight seriously in the fear of the Lord, doing everything in his/her power to facilitate your spiritual growth and development, it should be your highest honour to minister to his/her financial needs. Those who minister in the 'word and doctrine' (preaching and teaching) are worthy of double honour -1 Tim. 5:17.

Under Nehemiah's reformation, the first fruit offering and the tithe was reintroduced since they had been lost for many years and thus the priests and Levites were neglected. In Nehemiah 10, there occurred a re-

commitment to these practices. In Nehemiah 12, the people were more than overjoyed to do this because of the manner in which the priests served them.

Nehemiah 12:44

On that day men were also appointed over the chambers for the stores, **the** <u>contributions (offering)</u>, **the** <u>first</u> <u>fruits</u> <u>and the tithes</u>, to gather into them from the fields of the cities the portions required by the law <u>for the priests and</u> <u>Levites</u>; <u>FOR JUDAH REJOICED OVER THE PRIESTS AND LEVITES WHO SERVED</u>

It is critical that the first fruit be given to the correct person and it must not be misdirected. It must go to your 'Melchisedek' – the representative of Christ in your life. This person may re-direct the finances to where he deems necessary, e.g. to the poor, others in need, his own needs, etc.

A church as a group should also practice first fruits. Offerings are always heaved up. A leader of a local congregation in his personal capacity should give first fruits to the apostolic leader that he relates to – i.e. his spiritual father in the faith. Also, the church corporately should practice the giving of first fruits to the apostle that provides them spiritual oversight.

MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF FIRST FRUIT FUNDS

First fruit funds are given from one individual to another individual. Biblically, this giving is not institutional in the sense that it is directed to a corporate organisation. One's understanding of the principle will determine how one enacts the principle. When I offer first fruits, I intend for this money to go to my spiritual father, to be administrated by him at his sole discretion. I am completely trusting of his Christ-like character and uncompromising integrity in financial matters – thus there is no reservation in my heart when money leaves my hand and goes to his hands.

Some recommend that it is wise for churches to open a first fruit account, in which all monies given to the spiritual father can be deposited. Receiving first fruits in this fashion should be a decision of the spiritual father. This suggestion does create a sense of honesty, openness, transparency, accountability and responsibility in the way the monies are used. If the spiritual father chooses to administrate the reception of first fruits in this fashion, then the management and administration of this account should be the sole preserve of the spiritual father, since the giving of the first fruit is directed to him. Where there is concern that accountability structures should be put into place, this should not be to the point where the spiritual father cannot singularly determine how the funds should be spent. To reiterate, first fruits is a personal matter, not an institutional one.

How should the first fruit money be spent by the spiritual father? This is left entirely to his discretion. Biblically, he is allowed to use it for his personal needs (not greed) (Deut. 18:8).

Deut 18:8 He may EAT HIS SHARE of the sacrifices and offerings, even if he has a private source on income

Wisdom demands that the first fruit portion also be used for other issues also. It is recommended that the first fruit is also used and distributed for those who have desperate needs or to facilitate the spiritual development of the people. Money laid at the apostles feet was used to meet the needs of the people.

Acts 4:32-35

And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them. And with great power the apostles were

giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and <u>abundant grace was upon them al</u>. For (*i.e. because*) <u>there</u> was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would <u>sell them and bring the</u> proceeds of the sales and <u>lay them at the apostles' feet</u>, and they <u>would be distributed to each as any had need</u>.

Money placed 'at the feet' symbolically alludes to finances providing accelerated momentum to the purposes of God. Spiritual fathers must distinguish between when money is placed at their feet as compared to money placed 'in their hands' (not literally, but figuratively). Spiritually attuned spiritual fathers will always distribute first fruit funds wisely, and will not be governed by a love for money, which causes selfish indulgent expenditure of divine resources in the face of overt dire needs of the people. One of the requirements for eldership and thus for spiritual fathering is that the person must be free from the love of money (Titus 1:7). Paul warned us also not to 'peddle the Word' (2 Cor.2:17).

In <u>2 Kings 4:38-44</u>, we read of how Elisha used a first fruit offering comprised of twenty barley loaves given to him during a season of famine, to satisfy the hunger of one hundred of his spiritual sons. The corporate need took precedence over anything else, and Elisha wisely and caringly prioritised the broader need above his own. Grace multiplied the loaves, since one hundred men ate twenty loaves to more than satisfaction and still had some left over. Twenty multiplied by FIVE equates to hundred. Five is the number of grace. A first fruit offering in the hands of a spiritually sensitive spiritual father who, led by the Holy Spirit, wisely administrates and distributes it, has the potential to release a flow of grace that will multiply the resource making it useful and beneficial far beyond its absolute capacity. Refer to point 4 under 'Examples and Blessing of First Fruits'.

Set men who abuse the first fruit offerings solely for extravagant and excessive personal expenditures in the face of dire needs of their people will have to give an account to God for this behaviour. The first fruit finances must not be irresponsibly spent. The spiritual father should be free from the love of money and should not have a materialistic or covetous spirit. As much as there is tremendous blessing associated with the first fruit offering on the part of the GIVER of the first fruit, there is also a potential severe judgment attendant with it on the part of the RECIPIENT, if the money is not managed and spent in a way which ultimately honours the Lord.

<u>A BRIEF CASE STUDY OF THE ABUSE OF FIRST FRUIT OFFERINGS SOLELY FOR SELFISH, CARNAL</u> INDULGENCE :

The sons of Eli were chided by the Lord for abusing the first fruit offerings. It must be understood that these leaders were essentially backslidden, not even knowing the Lord: 1 Samuel 2:12 – 'Now the <u>sons of Eli</u> were <u>worthless men</u>; they <u>did not know the LORD</u>'. These were inaccurate leaders, not even in relationship with God himself. They are also described as 'worthless' fellows".

There is a potential severe judgment on the RECIPIENT of the first fruit, if the money is not managed and spent in a way which ultimately honours the Lord.

Worthless = eliyyaal (Belial) = Base, without profit, good for nothing¹⁰⁷, etc. This word often suggests a strong immoral component and the concept of wickedness (Job 34:18; Prov. 6:12; Nah. 1:11)¹⁰⁸. Other uses of the word, 'worthless' in the Bible suggest the following about it and thus the sons of Eli :

More Excellent Giving; Copyright © 2012 Randolph Barnwell. Reproduction in any form is permissible, provided that no monetary profit is gained. [Email: <u>randolph@eternalsound.co.za</u>; rbarnwell@mweb.co.za; Website: <u>www.randolphbarnwell.com</u>; Telephone: (+27) 83 2729 579] They were wicked to the core and satanic – they were literally 'sons of Belial" (2 Cor. 6:15-16); They abused and misused leadership power and privilege to satisfy carnal selfish desire; Their intent is to lure and seduce large groups away from the Lord, and/or the position of exactness (Deut. 13:12-15); They had overriding and flagrant disregard for rules of social engagement – again purely for carnal gratification of base needs (Judges 19).¹⁰⁹

Note how their abuse of the first fruit offering is described:

1 Samuel 2:29'Why do you kick at My sacrifice
and at My offering
dwelling, and honor your sons above Me, by making yourselves fat with the choicest (or
first) of every offering of My people Israel?'

Kick = baat = kick out; disdain, scorn. It refers to a disrespectful attitude and unholy actions.¹¹⁰

Greed and covetousness must not be present in those who receive first fruits. A respectful and fearful attitude is essential in the handling of first fruit funds. The very thing designed to bring blessing can result in a curse and judgement if not handled with righteousness and integrity. Eli's sons 'fattened' themselves. This speaks of unbridled and undisciplined use of the first fruit offering. They used it beyond the satisfaction of their need – but went into excessive personal indulgent abuse of it, and this, from a spiritual position is where they were backslidden. For this they were severely judged.

THE HANDLING OF THE FIRST FRUIT MUST BE SEEN TO BE HONOURABLE

The administration and distribution of the first fruit offering by the spiritual father or set-man must be done so with caution and wisdom, and be **SEEN to be honourable both before the Lord and men**.

2 Corinthians 8:20-21

- 20 taking precaution so that no one will discredit us in our administration of this generous gift;
- 21 for we have regard for <u>what is honorable</u>, <u>not only in the sight of the Lord</u>, but also <u>in the sight of men.</u>

Although this reference quoted above refers to a relief offering sent for a specific purpose in mind, and has no bearing on first fruit offerings, the principle contained is still a prudent one to observe when handling first fruits.

EXAMPLES AND BLESSINGS OF GIVING FIRST FRUITS

1. BLESSING ON YOUR HOUSE

Ezekiel 44:30"The first of all the first fruits of every kind and every contribution of every kind, from all
your contributions, shall be for the priests; you shall also give to the priest the first of your
dough to cause a blessing to REST on your house.

'Rest' = nuah = to settle upon; to fall upon; to dwell¹¹¹, etc.

This indicates an abiding blessing that permanently rests on everyone associated with the 'house'. First fruits have the effect of anchoring the blessing. Those in the 'house' of a father or leader (be it a biological family or spiritual family), are blessed in that the first fruit offered maintains the blessed state of the house.

The Message Bible renders the latter part of this verse as follows: **"Serve from your best and your home will be blessed."** This blessing transcends issues of provision and protection. It includes a blessing on the quality of relationships in that house and also the specific intention or will of God attendant with those relationships. 'House' alludes to the principles of the spiritual father and son dynamic. These relationships are blessed and are used by God to accomplish His global intent. The correlation between first fruit offerings and how the blessing of God persists in a spiritual father-son relationship to accomplish His will must be spiritually and prophetically understood.

2. <u>PARTAKING OF GRACE</u> : <u>COVENANT OF SALT</u>

Giving financial gifts to your spiritual father is a biblical way for you to access and thus be a partaker of his grace (Refer to the chapter 'Accessing Grace Through the Grace of Giving' in this manual). Giving first fruits is a powerful means of becoming a partaker of the grace of God given to your spiritual father. Scripturally, it is an 'everlasting covenant of salt'. When you give first fruits to your 'spiritual father', the first fruit becomes a tangible sign and symbol of your permanent covenant with him as a spiritual son, and it is also emblematic of the fact that his grace and anointing becomes mixed into your life, thereby flavouring and enhancing your life with that which God has richly endowed him.

Numbers 18: 8-19

8 <u>Then the Lord spoke to Aaron,</u> "Now behold, I Myself have given <u>you charge of My offerings</u>, even all the holy gifts of the sons of Israel <u>I have given them</u>

the holy gifts of the sons of Israel <u>I have given them to you as a portion and to your sons</u> as a perpetual allotment.

- "This shall be yours from the most holy gifts reserved from the fire; every offering of theirs, even every grain offering and every sin offering and every guilt offering, which they shall render to Me, shall be most holy for you and for your sons.
- 10 "As <u>the most holy gifts you shall eat it</u>; every male shall eat it. It shall be holy to you.
- 11 "This <u>also is yours</u>, the offering of their gift, even all the wave offerings of the sons of Israel; I have given them to you and to your sons and daughters with you as a perpetual allotment. <u>Everyone of your household</u> <u>who is clean may eat it.</u>
- 12 "All the <u>best of the fresh oil</u> and all the <u>best of the fresh wine</u> and of the grain, the <u>FIRST FRUIT</u> of those which they give to the Lord, <u>I HAVE GIVEN THEM TO YOU</u>.
- 13 "The <u>first ripe fruits</u> of all that is in their land, which they bring to the Lord, <u>shall be yours</u>; everyone of your household who is clean may eat it.
- 14 "Every devoted thing in Israel shall be yours.
- 15 "Every first issue of the womb of all flesh, whether man or animal, which they offer to the Lord, **shall be yours**; nevertheless the firstborn of man you shall surely redeem, and the firstborn of unclean animals you shall redeem.
- 16 "As to their redemption price, from a month old you shall redeem them, by your valuation, five shekels in silver, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, which is twenty gerahs.
- 17 "But the firstborn of an ox or the firstborn of a sheep or the firstborn of a goat, you shall not redeem; they are holy. You shall sprinkle their blood on the altar and shall offer up their fat in smoke as an offering by fire, for a soothing aroma to the Lord.
- 18 "<u>Their meat shall be yours</u>; it shall be yours like the breast of a wave offering and like the right thigh.
- 19 "<u>All the offerings</u> of the holy gifts, which the sons of Israel offer to the Lord, <u>I have given to you</u> and your sons and your daughters with you, as <u>a perpetual allotment</u>. <u>IT IS AN EVERLASTING COVENANT OF SALT</u> before the Lord to you and your descendants with you."

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Here, God is addressing Aaron, the priest. Note that all the offerings mentioned in this passage, including the first fruit offering, is to be an EVERLASTING (unending) COVENANT OF SALT before God to all priests and their sons (V.19). Priests were in full time employment in spiritual service to the people. This today would represent those who have committed themselves primarily to minister spiritually to God's people.

The term 'covenant of salt' largely indicates 'a perpetual ordinance'¹¹². This figurative form of expression was evidently founded on the conservative property of salt, which keeps meat from corruption; and hence it became **an emblem of inviolability and permanence**.¹¹³ It is a common phrase among the oriental people, who consider the eating of salt a pledge of fidelity, binding them in a covenant of friendship. **Thus a** 'covenant of salt' became to be considered equivalent to an indissoluble covenant, or inviolable contract.¹¹⁴

Tradition has it that, when two people get married, they would each bring their own bag of salt to the priest, who would empty both bags of salt into his own bag and shake it – thus mixing the two bags, fusing them into one, so that the salt of the man and the woman become so mixed that it would be impossible to separate the salt into the original bags. When you give first fruits to your 'spiritual father', the first fruit becomes a tangible sign and symbol of your permanent covenant with him as a spiritual son, and it is also emblematic of the fact that his grace and anointing becomes mixed into your life, thereby flavouring your life with that which God has richly endowed him. In this, there is participation, partnership, preservation, protection, privilege, pledge of covenantal commitment, etc. By giving first fruits you become a partaker of the grace of God operative within your spiritual father. More on this principle of accessing grace is fully addressed in the chapter entitled, 'Accessing Grace through the Grace of Giving'.

3. THE BLESSING OF PROVERBS 3:9-10

"Honor the Lord from your wealth and from the FIRST OF ALL your produce; So your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine."

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	King James Version (KJV)	New Kings James (NKJV)	New American Standard (NAS)	New Living Translation (NLT)	Contemporary English Version (CEV)	Amplified Bible	Message Bible
Verse 9	Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase	Honor the Lord with your possessions, and with the first fruits of all your increase	Honor the Lord from your wealth and from the first of all your produce	Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the best part of everything your land produces.	Honor the Lord by giving him your money and the first part of all your crops.	Honour the Lord with your capital and sufficiency [from righteous labors]; with the first fruits of all your income	Honour the Lord with everything you own; give him the first and the best
Verse 10	So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine	So your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine.	So your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will overflow with new wine.	Then he will fill your barns with grain, and your vats will overflow with the finest wine	Then you will have more grain and grapes than you will ever need	So shall your storage places be filled with plenty, and your vats will be overflowing with new wine	Your barns will burst; your vats will brim over

Table : Comparative Renderings of Proverbs 3:9,10

Note that when we give our first fruits, we HONOUR the Lord.

The Hebrew word for 'Honour'= Kabed = to make heavy or weighty¹¹⁵

When applied to God, the word 'honour' represents a quality corresponding to Him and by which He is recognized. When you honour someone, you regard and treat them with dignity, respect and distinction. It has reference to how one esteems God and His Word in your heart and mind, and often calls for doing something tangible to demonstrate this.

Isaiah 43:23"You have not brought to Me the sheep of your burnt offerings, Nor have you honored Mewith your sacrifices. I have not burdened you with offerings, Nor wearied you with incense.

Consistently in the Scriptures, the use of the Hebrew word, 'kabed' or 'kabad' for honour or glorify nearly always indicates **a heaviness with some specific result**, e.g. "wealthy" (heavy with goods, property, money) or "sinful" (heavy with guilt). In terms of Proverbs 3:9, when we honour the Lord with our wealth and first fruits, the resultant manifestation of the Lord's response is described in Proverbs 3:10, i.e. plentiful barns and overflowing vats.

In Joshua 7:19, Joshua pleads with Achan (who sinned by taking the accursed thing from the enemy camp) to honour the Lord by confessing his sin (the word glory in this verse = kabed = to honour). In this and similar circumstances, **"giving honour" always refers to doing something**; what Achan was to do was to tell the truth.

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Proverbs 3:9 explains how we can bring honour to the Lord -- by giving him the first fruit of our substance. The Hebrew word for '**substance'** is **the word 'hon' which means 'wealth or sufficiency**¹¹⁶. The way in which you honour God with your wealth is by giving Him the 'first fruits'.

We either honour or dishonour God with our money, specifically how we handle our first fruit. Jericho was to be a kind of first fruit offered to God. Israel could not enjoy the spoil from the conquest of Jericho. They could enjoy the spoil of other cities as they would be directed. The spoil of Jericho was to be devoted to the Lord. Specifically, Israel was not to touch any of the gold, silver, bronze or iron – this was to be preserved for the Temple. Achan took a Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver and a bar of gold weighing fifty shekels. In essence, that which was reserved to be a first fruit offering to the Lord, he took for himself and hid it in his tent. For this he suffered a judgement of death. When we touch the Lord's portion, we incur death on ourselves. In what way? This sin of Achan affected the potential success of subsequent battles. If after the revelation of first fruit has dawned on you, and you do not practice it, it will affect your potential future harvest in God.

Those who 'HONOUR' God, He will also HONOUR. 1 Samuel 2:30b "... those who honor Me I will honour...".

Proverbs 3 :9,10 describes a Two-fold blessing on the Giver of First Fruits:

a) <u>'Your Barns will be Filled with Plenty'</u>

'**Barns' = 'asamim' = 'places for heaping together'.**¹¹⁷ Crops from a successful harvest were heaped up in barns for the present and future food supplies. The promise of the Lord here is that these places where we heap up supplies to provide sustenance for our physical and material well-being will be 'filled with plenty'.

Plenty' = 'saba' = satiety or plenty.¹¹⁸ This speaks of an overflowing abundance. It not only indicates an abundance, fullness or plentifulness, but also an absolute satiation and satisfaction or contentment.

Symbolic Application: Barns stored grain which was used to make bread. This has reference not just to your physical needs, but also to the Word of God, the Bread of Life. You will receive sustenance and spiritual nourishment from the Word of the Lord.

b) Your Vats or (Presses) will Overflow with New Wine

Engagement in creative entrepreneurial or business endeavours will be crowned with success. Note the emphasis on 'new wine'. The primary difference between 'new wine' and 'fermented wine' is that the former is produced by a vine and the latter by a process. Isaiah 65:8 indicates that the "new wine is found in the cluster". So 'new wine' is unfermented grape juice, i.e. that which is found in the cluster. New wine, i.e. wine in the cluster, is unfermented; it is

the pure blood or juice of the grape, whereas fermented wine is the product of a process (fermentation) rather than the product of a vine. The promised blessing in Proverbs 3:9 is that our vats will burst with NEW WINE. 'Vats' or 'presses' refers to winepresses. A wine press was a stone vat in which the juice of grapes is pressed. Each vineyard typically had its own winepress, in the form of a square basin. Grapes were heaped up in the wine press and then crushed by men and women who leaped and danced on the crop (Jeremiah 48:33). The juices flowed out of the vat and were collected in clay jars or new wineskins. Presses indicate

the means by which grapes were converted to grape juice and then ultimately to wine. Without the press, there would be no juice nor wine. In other words, the press indicates **the means by which the fruit of our labour is put to further and greater usefulness or productiveness**. The one who gives first fruits can thus appropriate for himself, not only financial abundance (barns filled with plenty), but is also promised a blessing on the use of his finance - he will use his finance productively such that his many needs will be met. Implied in this whole idea is that God will bless anything or any means used by the person in order to convert one thing into something that would be of greater value and usefulness. In other words, **any engagement at creative, entrepreneurial or business endeavours will be crowned with success.**

New wine, naturally speaking, is used to describe wine that has started a fermentation process toward a more mature state of good quality wine. The fermentation process is initially quite volatile and potent. This is why 'new wine' cannot be put into old wineskins – the wineskins will burst – being unable to contain the intensity of the fermentation process. Hence, here in Proverbs 3;10, a promise is made to the giver of first fruits that rate of change particularly in the earliest stages of a process of production will be intense and accelerated. He who offers first fruits will walk into certain realms of reward, blessing and heightened productivity that is usually associated with a long process of development or maturation, but he does so in an instant or within an extremely short period of time.

- **CF.** <u>Malachi 6:15</u> "You will sow but you will not reap. You will tread the olive but will not anoint yourself with oil; And the grapes, but you will not drink wine.
- <u>Symbolic Application</u>: Wine is a symbol of revelation. Water is symbolic of the cleansing dynamic and characteristic of the Word of God. In John chapter two, Jesus converted water into wine. The 'water of the Word' becomes the 'wine of the Word'. The wine of the revelation from the Word has a positive intoxicating effect our entire behaviour and lifestyle and we begin to live our lives being highly influenced by the quality of revelation we receive. Our spiritual sight, perception or comprehension, is like that of Judah's, viz. 'red with wine' i.e. brilliant or darkly flashing in a good sense¹¹⁹ (Gen. 49:12).

The giver of first fruit is ideally postured to access greater revelation from the Father. Revelation (wine) will burst forth and overflow in your life. This revelation will affect your spiritual sight and condition your outward behaviour. Jesus said that if you are unfaithful with handling money, how can God entrust to you the true riches of the Kingdom.

(Note : Melchisedek served Abraham with bread and wine)

4. CORPORATE PROVISION

THE EXAMPLE OF THE MAN FROM BAAL-SHALISHA

2 Kings 4:38-44

- 38 When Elisha returned to Gilgal, there was <u>a famine in the land</u>. As the <u>sons of the prophets were sitting</u> <u>before him</u>, he said to his servant, "Put on the large pot and boil stew for the sons of the prophets."
- 39 Then one went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine and gathered from it his lap full of wild gourds, and came and sliced them into the pot of stew, for they did not know what they were.

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- 40 So they poured it out for the men to eat. And as they were eating of the stew, they cried out and said, "O man of God, there is death in the pot." And they were unable to eat.
- 41 But he said, "<u>Now bring meal</u>." He threw it into the pot and said, "Pour it out for the people that they may eat." <u>Then there was no harm in the pot.</u>
- 42 Now a man came from Baal-shalishah, and <u>brought the man of God</u> bread of the <u>first fruits</u>, <u>twenty</u> loaves of barley and fresh ears of grain in his sack. And he said, "Give them to the people that they may eat."
- 43 His attendant said, "What, will I set this before a hundred men?" But he said, **"Give them to the people that they may ea**t, for thus says the Lord, 'They shall eat and have some left over.' "
- 44 So he set it before them, and <u>they ate and had some left over</u>, according to the word of the Lord.

It was the meal from the hand of Elisha that prevented the poison in the stew from killing the sons of the prophets. Meal was fine flour used as a basic ingredient of bread, and thus represents the WORD which comes from Elisha, the spiritual father over the sons of the prophets. Greater care and obedience is required from sons in heeding the words released from their spiritual father – this will arrest the attempts of the enemy to poison them leading to the death of their calling and assignments in God. Within this environment of fatherhood-sonship, a man gave 20 loaves of bread and a sack of fresh grain as a first fruit offering to Elisha, the man. Realising the need for food because of the famine in the land, Elisha instructs that the 20 loaves be distributed among 100 men. The bread multiplied and there was even some left over. First fruits in the hands of an anointed and sensitive leader will ensure that the needs of the people are met. Imagine if this man withheld his first fruit. The principle here is that the receipt of first fruit offerings by your spiritual father, will release an abundant supply both naturally and spiritually upon the entire corporate community of true sons in the house. One man's first fruit offering met the needs of a whole group of people when this offering was channeled to and through the accurate recipient.

The man who gave these first fruits to Elisha was from Baal-shalisha, which means "thrice-great lord"¹²⁰ – hence a reference to first fruit giving as the completion of three fold giving.

The number 20 is significant. It denotes **expectancy.** 20 is one short of 21; [21=3X7; 3 = divine perfection; 7 = spiritual perfection]¹²¹. Hence his first fruit offering was an **expression of his level of expectancy that divine and spiritual perfection** would come to his life.

5. FINANCIAL SUSTENANCE AND PROVISION IN TIMES OF ECONOMIC RECESSION/DEPRESSION

THE WIDOW OF ZAREPHATH

1 Kings 17:8-15

- 8 Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying,
- 9 "Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and stay there; behold, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you."
- 10 So he arose and went to Zarephath, and when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks; and he called to her and said, "Please get me a little water in a jar, that I may drink."
- 11 As she was going to get it, he called to her and said, "Please bring me a piece of bread in your hand."
- 12 But she said, "As the Lord your God lives, I have no bread, only a handful of flour in the bowl and a little oil in the jar; and behold, I am gathering a few sticks that I may go in and prepare for me and my son, that we may eat it and die."
- 13 Then Elijah said to her, "Do not fear; go, do as you have said, but make me a little bread cake from it **<u>FIRST</u>** and bring it out to me, and afterward you may make one for yourself and for your son.
- 14 "For thus says the Lord God of Israel, 'The bowl of flour shall not be exhausted, nor shall the jar of oil be empty, until the day that the Lord sends rain on the face of the earth.' "
- 15 So she went and did according to the word of Elijah, and she and he and her household ate for many days.

16 The bowl of flour was not exhausted nor did the jar of oil become empty, according to the word of the Lord which He spoke through Elijah

Honouring Elijah FIRST by giving him first the bread that she made, secured for her an unending supply of bread throughout the duration of the three year famine. The observation of first fruits practice will immunise you from lack in times of economic recession or economic depression.

6. <u>REDEMPTION – MIGRATION FROM REWARD TO INHERITANCE</u>

RUTH, THE MOABITESS

Read through the entire book of Ruth. Ruth is described as a spiritual son to Naomi, who thus is depicted in the book as a spiritual father to her (Ruth 4:15). As a spiritual son to Naomi, her spiritual father, Ruth consistently is concerned for the welfare and purposes of God embedded within her. She gleans in Boaz's field from the start of the barley harvest (Passover) up until the end of the wheat harvest (Pentecost). One ephah or measure of barley is gleaned. She prioritises the need of Naomi and would always bring back an 'offering' to her. Even upon her receipt of six measures of barley at Boaz's threshing floor, she is instructed by Boaz (representative of Christ) not to return to her mother-in-law (spiritual father) empty handed. One plus six equates to seven, the number of perfection. She has now reached perfection in the extent of her reward from the Lord because of her perpetual and consistent acts of obedience to and support for her spiritual father, Naomi.

In Ruth chapter 4, she is brought into marriage with Boaz and now owns the field that she once gleaned in – she has come into her inheritance. She migrates beyond the realm of sowing and reaping to that of active appropriation of her inheritance in the Lord. To reap, you have to sow. To activate your inheritance you have to come into a mature state of sonship characterised by perfected obedience in all domains – including financial obedience.

Further, the male child born to Ruth and Boaz, was figuratively offered as a first fruit son, in that the child is not accorded as her own, but the son of Naomi (according to Levirate law). Redemption is a powerful theme in the book of Ruth. The words, 'redeem', 'redeemer' and 'redemption' together occur twenty times. Scriptures teach that redemption is past, present and future – God has redeemed us; He doth redeem us; and He will yet redeem us. **God's redemptive work will be swiftly facilitated when we bring perfection to the area of our financial giving in reference to our spiritual fathers by observing the practice of first fruit.**

[The book of Ruth is more thoroughly explored in my study manual, 'Spiritual Fathering and Sonship'].¹²²

7. ACCEPTANCE AND REGARD BY GOD & FUNCTION BEYOND HUMAN LIMITATIONS

The Example of Abel

Genesis 4:2b-5

- 2b And Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.
- 3 So it came about in the course of time that <u>Cain brought an offering</u> to the Lord of the fruit of the ground.
- 4 Abel, on his part also brought of the **<u>FIRSTLINGS</u>** of his flock **and of their fat portions**. And the **<u>Lord had</u> <u>regard for Abel AND for his offering</u>;**
- 5 but <u>for Cain and for his offering</u> He had **no regard**. So Cain became **very angry and his countenance fell**.

Abel, without any external command from God, offered the **FIRSTLINGS** of his flocks to the Lord – he gave God the best and choicest – the first born of all his flocks – he offered to God a first fruit offering. Some believe that God rejected Cain's offering because it was the product of the ground, and that Abel's offering is accepted because it required blood sacrifice – the killing of the animals – thus prophetically pointing toward the death of Christ. This was not essentially necessarily the case. It is rather the **internal state of the person making the offering which becomes reflective in the quality of the actual offering itself**, that was the important issue.

Names in Scripture are more than personal pronouns used to identify people, but highlight either aspects of character or destiny. Look at the meanings of their names:

Cain = "Possession, Acquisition, Fabrication, I have gotten".¹²³

His name implies the following - "to be man-made or self-made". Symbolically, 'it has got to do with a position of independence, self-sufficiency, of self-made accomplishments, motivated by a heart of pride and self-centredness'. (Thamo Naidoo)

Abel = " A Breath, Vanity, Vapour, Withering, Fading away"¹²⁴ [Implies 'empty and void'].

This name echoes the sentiment - "I am nothing". (Thamo Naidoo)

The domain of financial offerings is the context in which one can either find great favour and acceptance with God, or rejection from Him. Cain becomes the possessor of land – he works with the earth – "but he becomes possessed by the things he is meant to rule" (Thamo Naidoo). Cain gave an offering – a token of what he thinks God is deserving of. Abel, in himself regards himself as nothing, indicating a posture of humility and utter dependence on God. Cain, as his name suggests, owned everything, whereas Abel owned nothing and so gave God

everything, typified in the best, the FIRST of his animals as representative of himself – a more excellent offering. The presentation of an offering can either be the start of great blessing or the commencement of your demise. Because of inaccuracy in the realm of presenting an offering to God, the offering of Cain's is rejected. The domain of financial offerings is the context in which one can either find great favour and acceptance with God, or rejection from Him – dependent upon the internal state of the person making the offering.

In Hebrews 11, Abel is listed **FIRST** in the list of faith heroes and his offering is described as **'more excellent'** (NKJV) than that of Cain. Thus the first recorded biblical offering that was acceptable to God was a first fruit offering.

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'More Excellent' = 'pleion / pleion / pleon' = greater or superior both in quantity and quality.¹²⁵

The NASB describes Abel's offerings as 'BETTER' than that of Cain's.

Hebrews 11:4By faith Abel offered to God a BETTER sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony
that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still
speaks.

Better = polus / polos = many, much, large.¹²⁶

Thus Abel's offering was far superior than that of Cain's both in quantity and in quality.

In describing Cain's offerings, the Hebrew word, 'Minchah' is used.

Offering = minchâh = a donation.¹²⁷

On the other hand, Abel's first fruit gift is described as the 'firstlings' of his flock.

Firstlings = bekôr = firstborn; hence 'chief'¹²⁸

In addition, the Scripture records that besides the 'firstlings of his flock', Abel offered also 'of their fat portions'.

Fat Portions = cheleb chêleb = the richest, choicest or finest part ¹²⁹

Thus, Abel offered to God the best or choicest part of his flock, namely the first born. Cain offered a **donation**. Great care and thought was taken by Abel in what he presented to God, while it seems that Cain gave no proper consideration in what he presented to God.

Take note also that Hebrews 11 indicates that Abel offered his firstlings and their fat portions **<u>BY FAITH.</u>** Faith has got to do with an accurate , penetrative and insightful 'perspective' of God, His will and purposes in the earth. We walk by faith and not by sight. Faith involves prophetic sight into an unseen reality. It is rooted in a Word from God – and this proves that Abel's relationship with God was active and vital and that his communication with God was relevant and current. Without faith it is impossible to please God. Faith and the desire for active, accurate obedience must characterise first fruit giving.

Abel's firstling offering <u>set a foundation and pattern</u> for many 'firstborn' son offerings that would take place in the future, e.g. Abraham's intended sacrifice of Isaac and the ultimate of all – the 'only begotten of the Father, our Lord Jesus Christ' being offered as the firstborn son on the cross to atone for the sin of the whole world. It would seem that Abel 'SAW' something by faith within the offering he was presenting to God. His was the 'first', indicative of a harvest to come – that would bring with it the realisation of God's redemptive will and salvation purpose for all humankind. Prophetic 'sight' and understanding is essential when we offer first fruits. You have got to see the significance and weightedness attached to what you are presenting to the Lord.

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The Scriptures teach that God had **regard or respect first for Abel**, the man, and <u>then</u> for Abel's first fruit **offering** – and then God counted him as righteous. The giver validates the gift. In this case, Abels' gift was accurately representative of the placing of God FIRST in his life. His gift reflected the state and quality of his internal state of heart. Because of this, Abel is regarded as 'righteous' before the Lord. Thus, the gift was of superior quality and quantity than Cain's. The word 'regard' is interesting:

Regard = sa'ah =to look with favour;to look on something with approval, to accept it;to look at intently (cf. Job 7:19; Ps. 39:13);to look at with high regard and appreciation.130

God looked on Abel's first fruit giving with approval, acceptance and appreciation. His first fruit recruited the favour and favourable gaze of the Lord. Abel's first fruit offering was only a tangible indication that he placed God FIRST in his life generally. One should not practice first fruit giving if this first fruit offering is not an expression of the fact that in your entire life, you place God and His Kingdom first – in ALL you do. As God rejected Cain's offering, so Elisha, a representation of God in the context in which he functioned, refused a financial gift from Naaman because he perceived that even though the God of Israel healed Naaman, he was still focused on using his position and resources to facilitate and support the worship of Rimmon, an Assyrian deity/idol. (2 Kings 5:15-19).

A brief aside here: Spiritual fathers or leaders must know when to accept and when not to receive first fruit offerings from people. How can you as an earthly spiritual father over someone accept an offering which God in the spirit has rejected? We must accept that which God accepts and reject that God which rejects. We cannot bless that which God looks upon with disapproval and disfavour. To favour that which God frowns upon equates to not representing God exactly in that context. Having said though, always be led by the Spirit and always seek to administrate these matters with grace, mercy with a view to redemption of the one whose offering in your spiritual perception is not acceptable to God. Consider that in the case of God's rejection of Cain's offering and Elisha's disapproval of Gehazi's acceptance of Namaan's gift, that in both cases, there was offered to them an opportunity to repent and remedy their disposition and behavior.

He whose offering is exactly representative of his spiritual state and devotion, will reap the REGARD of the Lord – a favourable and approving response from the Lord.

Hebrews 11:4 also indicates that Abel, "though being dead, yet still speaks". This has many prophetic interpretations, of which I provide two here below:

1) The dead cannot speak in the natural, yet Abel, being dead, still speaks. The act of speaking requires 'life' and not 'death'. Death indicates an end to all human function. Abel's voice and function continues beyond death. The one whose first fruit offering finds acceptance and regard from the Lord will begin to operate beyond the limitations of what his natural circumstances dictate and prescribe.

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2) Abel, symbolically is dead to himself, thus he can speak. We must become dead to self, the preoccupation with personal security, the unnatural pursuit of wealth and sin; and in a spirit of abandoned financial obedience to every financial principle of the Kingdom of God, express our thankful acknowledgement of His empowerment, provision, and utter dependance on Him. By this, we allow God to amplify and extend our VOICE - our influence - to realms, places, jurisdictions and people we may not physically venture to or physically encounter.

The measure of your revelation will determine the quantity and quality of your giving. But also, your handling of finances will either have a positive or negative effect on your measure of revelation and spiritual insight.

8. <u>GREATER SPIRITUAL SIGHT AND ETERNAL RICHES</u>

The 'clear' (single) eye versus the 'bad'(evil) eye :

Matthew 6:19-24

- 19 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.
- 20 "But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal;
- 21 for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.
- 22 "The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light.
- 23 "But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!
- 24 "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.
- **Clear = haploos =** Single, i.e., not complex, easy, used of the eye as not seeing double as when it is diseased. When the eye accomplishes its purpose of seeing things as they are, then it is *haploús*, single, healthy, perfect. Singleness, simplicity, absence of folds.¹³¹

A derivative of the Greek word, 'haploos' is 'haplos' = **bountifully**.¹³² Thus the single or clear eye refers to **SINCERITY** but also to **GENEROUS** and **BOUNTIFUL** giving.

Bad = ponērós =Evil in a moral or spiritual sense, wicked, malicious, mischievous133(Root word = penes = starving, indigent-poor]134 (see Prov.28:22)

Note the context of this passage above: in verses 19-21, Jesus speaks about finances; in verse 22-23 He speaks about degrees or levels of spiritual sight dependant upon the measure of light or darkness in one's eye; then in verse 24 He speaks about the impossibility of serving God and wealth (mammon). The condition of your 'eye' will determine the degree of spiritual illumination and light in you. The eye is often used to indicate one's understanding and mindset (e.g. the eyes of your understanding being enlightened – Eph.1:18). If one's mind is single, clear, free from diseased thinking especially in reference to finances, pure, void of trying to find the speck in someone else's eye, then one's capacity for prophetic and spiritual sight is increased. The converse is true for the bad or evil eye condition. It is interesting that this discussion is sandwiched between two points made about finances and one's attitude to it.

How you handle your finances will indicate much about your devotion to God. Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. The location of your money will bring revelation on the location of your heart. The measure of your revelation will determine the quantity and quality of your giving. But also, your handling of finances will either have a positive or negative effect on your measure of revelation and spiritual insight.

Luke 16:11 "Therefore if you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous wealth, who will entrust the true riches to you?

Faithfulness in handling wealth qualifies one for stewardship of eternal riches.

FIRST FRUITS, GRACE, THE APOSTOLIC AND SPIRITUAL FATHERING-SONSHIP

First fruit offerings are given by a spiritual son to his/her spiritual father in the Lord. Spiritual fathers impart grace to their spiritual sons **through the release of the Word of the Lord** unto them. There is great correlation between the principle of 'first things', the 'apostolic', 'grace-impartation' and 'spiritual fathering-sonship' in Scripture. Some of this correlation is already alluded to in this manual. **Here are a few more thoughts**:

- <u>The church</u> is also called the 'church of the <u>FIRST</u>-born' (Hebrews 12:23).
- <u>The church</u> is built on the **foundation of** <u>APOSTLES</u> and prophets (Eph.2:20). It is to apostles and prophets that God's mysteries are revealed (Eph. 3:5). The apostolic ministry is set <u>FIRST</u> in the church (1 Cor. 12:28).
- <u>Abraham</u>, 'the <u>FATHER</u> of all those who believe' (Rom. 4:11), was willing to offer his <u>FIRST-</u>born son, Isaac (Gen. 22).
- <u>At the exodus of Israel</u> from Egyptian bondage, the 'Passover' was inaugurated. The <u>FIRST</u>-born of every Egyptian household died because their doorpost had no blood of a lamb smeared on it. The firstborn of every house of Israel was preserved and so the nation of Israel, God's corporate firstborn, was delivered from long-standing bondage (Ex. 4:22-23; Jer. 2:3). Within the principle of 'first-born', 'first things' and 'first fruits' is protection, preservation and deliverance.
- <u>The tribe of Judah</u> is a most accurate representation of the apostolic spirit (1 Chron. 2:3ff; Matthew 1:1ff; Judges 1:1) and occupies a <u>'FIRST'</u> position in dispensing God's purposes within the nation of Israel.
- <u>The spirit and grace configuration of Elijah</u> restores the principle of <u>SPIRITUAL FATHERING AND</u> <u>SONSHIP</u> (Malachi 4:5,6) and this restoration will end the curse attendant with earth and thus ignite the restoration of 'all things' (Matt. 17:10-11; Mark 9:11-12). Matthew 17:11 indicates that Elijah is coming <u>'FIRST'</u>.
- <u>Twelve spies</u> spied out the promised land around the region of Hebron. The specific time of year in which this occurred was at the "the season of the <u>FIRST</u> ripe grapes" (Num. 13:20b). The number twelve symbolically indicates an <u>apostolic</u> or governmental position.

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- JERICHO, the first city to be taken when the conquest of Canaan began, was a type of the first fruit. Jericho was a fortified city that marked the <u>'entrance'</u> into the land of Canaan, a land of God's promise of abundance. One of the meanings of 'Jericho' is <u>'sent'</u> which highlights the apostolic principle (apostle means 'sent one'). Another meaning of Jericho is 'let him smell it' or a 'fragrant place'. Herein is implied that first fruits rise up to God as a sweet and pleasant worshipful fragrance (cf. Acts 10:4 and Phil. 4:18) or that the huge degree of success attendant at Jericho is but only a 'smell' a hint or an indication of the greater more abundant harvest or levels of conquest to follow.
- The following scriptures further link the concepts :

Leviticus 19:23-25

- 23 'When you <u>enter the land and plant</u> all kinds of trees for food, then you shall count their fruit as forbidden. Three years it shall be forbidden to you; it shall not be eaten.
- 24 'But in the fourth year all its fruit shall be holy, an offering of praise to the Lord.
- 25 'In the fifth year you are to eat of its fruit, that <u>its yield may increase for you</u>; I am the Lord your God.

Deuteronomy 26:1-2

- 1 "Then it shall be, when you enter the land which the Lord your God gives you as an inheritance, and you possess it and live in it,
- 2 that you shall <u>take some of the first of all the produce</u> of the ground which you bring in from your land that the Lord your God gives you, and you shall put it in a basket and go <u>to the place where the Lord your God chooses to establish His name</u>.

Numbers 15:17-21

- 17 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,
- 18 "Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, '<u>When you enter</u> the land where I bring you,
- 19 then it shall be, that **when you eat of the food of the land**, you shall <u>lift up an offering</u> to the Lord.
- 20 '<u>Of the first</u> of your dough you shall lift up a cake <u>as an offering</u>; as the offering of the threshing floor, so you shall lift it up.
- 21 '<u>From the first</u> of your dough you shall give to the Lord an offering <u>throughout your generations.</u>

If, on entering the land, there was already in existence crops and trees, then the first part of the harvest / fruit was to be given to the Lord as a first fruit offering.

On entering the new land and having planted new crops and trees, Israel was forbidden from the fruit thereof in the first three years. **The number three represents that which is 'solid, real, substantial, complete and entire'.** ¹³⁵The first three years after planting a new crop indicates that this crop and its yield have come to a position of completeness.

In the fourth year, the entire harvest of fruit was given to the Lord – 'its fruit shall be holy'. **'Four' indicates an apostolic emphasis**.¹³⁶ The giving of first fruits prophetically suggests **a new apostolic order or season** in one's life.

In the fifth year they were able to eat the fruit, obviously observing first fruit offerings as well, so **'that its YIELD may INCREASE for you'. 'Five' is the number of 'grace'**.¹³⁷ Greater and more

substantial grace is imparted to those who give first fruit offerings. When grace is present in one's life in a significant way then your YIELD or harvest in all you do is dramatically increased. The phrase 'Ruth the Moabitess' occurs five times in the book of Ruth. **The root meaning of Naomi** (pleasant, agreeable) is 'grace'.¹³⁸ Grace from the spiritual father (Naomi) is released to the spiritual son (Ruth), when the spiritual son ministers financial provision to the spiritual father. Presently, apostles are revealing truths previously hidden to the church. This includes the understanding and practice of first fruit giving. There is a tremendous flow of the grace of God released through apostolic fathers in our present day. Many refer to the present season in which the church finds itself as the 'Apostolic Season' or 'Apostolic Reformation', a time in which every inaccurate or deformed teaching and practice is being corrected and 'reformed' or brought back to God's original intent and design. It is therefore no surprise that the first fruit has been restored to the church in our day.

REFORMATION AND FIRST FRUIT

Whenever Israel went astray and away from God, God would raise up a reformer to bring more alignment of the nation to the ways of God. In these times, very often a call was made to return to the practice of three-fold giving, viz. first fruits, tithes and offerings. In times of national spiritual decline, giving ceased. At times, because of the judgement of economic famine on the land, no harvest was produced, and thus no offerings could be given (Joel 1:10-12). The ministering priesthood suffered and was to a large extent nonfunctional, except for a few who remained faithful (Ezek. 44). An integral phase of the reformational processes of God is to bring His people to accurate patterns of giving and financial stewardship, reflective of accurate lifestyles, so as to restore His people financially, not just 'spiritually'. The link between 'reformation' and 'more excellent giving' is illustrated in the reformations under Hezekiah and Nehemiah.

Hezekiah : <u>2 Chronicles 31:3-12</u>

- 3 He also appointed the king's portion of his goods for the burnt offerings, namely, for the morning and evening burnt offerings, and the burnt offerings for the sabbaths and for the new moons and for the fixed festivals, as it is written in the law of the Lord.
- 4 Also <u>HE COMMANDED THE PEOPLE</u> who lived in Jerusalem to give <u>the portion due to the priests and the</u> <u>Levites</u>, that they might <u>devote themselves to the law of the Lord</u>.
- 5 <u>AS SOON AS THE ORDER SPREAD</u>, the sons of Israel **provided in abundance** the **first fruits** of grain, new wine, oil, honey and of all the produce of the field; and they **brought in abundantly the tithe of all.**
- 6 The sons of Israel and Judah who lived in the cities of Judah also brought in the <u>tith</u>e of oxen and sheep, and the <u>tithe</u> of sacred gifts which were <u>consecrated to the Lord their God</u>, and <u>placed them in heaps.</u>
- 7 In the third month they began to make the <u>heaps</u>, and finished them by the <u>seventh month</u>.
- 8 When Hezekiah and the rulers came and saw the heaps, they blessed the Lord and His people Israel.
- 9 Then <u>Hezekiah questioned</u> the priests and the Levites <u>concerning the heaps</u>.
- 10 Azariah the chief priest of the house of Zadok said to him, "Since the contributions began to be brought into the house of the Lord, <u>we have had enough to eat with plenty left over</u>, for the Lord has blessed His people, and <u>this great quantity is left over</u>."
- 11 Then Hezekiah commanded them to **prepare rooms** in the house of the Lord, and they prepared them.
- 12 They faithfully brought in the contributions and the tithes and the consecrated things; and Conaniah the Levite was the officer in charge of them and his brother Shimei was second.

¹¹⁵

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Nehemiah

Nehemiah 10:35-39

- 35 and that they might <u>bring the first fruits</u> of our ground and <u>the first fruits</u> of all the <u>fruit of every tree</u> to the house of the <u>Lord annually</u>.
- 36 and bring to the house of our God the <u>firstborn</u> of our sons and of our cattle, and the <u>firstborn</u> of our herds and our flocks as it is written in the law, <u>for the priests</u> who are **ministering in the house of our God**.
- 37 We will also bring the <u>first of our dough</u>, our contributions, the fruit of every tree, the new wine and the oil <u>to the priests</u> at the chambers of the house of our God, and the <u>tithe of our ground to the Levites</u>, for the Levites are they who receive the tithes in all the rural towns.
- 38 The priest, the son of Aaron, shall be with the Levites when the Levites receive tithes, and the Levites shall bring up the tenth of the tithes to the house of our God, to the chambers of the storehouse.
- 39 For the sons of Israel and the sons of Levi shall bring the contribution of the grain, the new wine and the oil to the chambers; there are the utensils of the sanctuary, the priests who are ministering, the gatekeepers and the singers. Thus we will not neglect the house of our God.

Nehemiah 12:44

On that day <u>men were also appointed</u> over the <u>chambers for the stores</u>, <u>the contributions (offerings)</u>, <u>the first fruits</u> <u>and the tithes</u>, to gather into them from the fields of the cities the <u>portions required by the law</u> for the <u>priests and</u> <u>Levites</u>; for <u>Judah rejoiced</u> over <u>the priests and Levites</u> <u>who served</u>.

NEHEMIAH 13 : 10-14

- 10 I also discovered that <u>the portions of the Levites had not been given them</u>, so that the <u>Levites</u> and the singers who performed the service had gone away, <u>each to his own field</u>.
- 11 **So I reprimanded the officials** and said, "Why is the house of God forsaken?" Then I gathered them together and restored them to their posts.
- 12 All Judah then brought <u>the tithe</u> of the grain, wine and oil into the storehouses.
- 13 In charge of the storehouses I appointed Shelemiah the priest, Zadok the scribe, and Pedaiah of the Levites, and in addition to them was Hanan the son of Zaccur, the son of Mattaniah; for they were considered reliable, and it was their task to distribute to their kinsmen.
- 14 **Remember me** <u>for this</u>, O my God, and do not blot out my loyal deeds which I have performed for the house of my God and its services.

Carefully studying the details in the above scriptural passages, note the following features in these financial reformations: There was....

- ✓ A call to return to accurate giving,
- ✓ An administrative procedure set in place for effective management,
- ✓ The setting aside of chambers for storage,
- ✓ A re-adjustment of the mindset of the people;
- ✓ A new joy and honour for those with spiritual responsibility
- ✓ A re-prioritisation of the welfare and upkeep of the ministering priesthood;
- ✓ A restoration of called/set-apart ones to focus solely, without distraction, on their respective functions and responsibilities, without care for personal welfare, since this was more than adequately taken care of
- ✓ A spirit of joy and willingness;
- \checkmark A vastly significant and notable increase in the quantity of what was offered.
- ✓ A spirit of extreme generosity and liberality in the givers

✓ No lack between specified harvest periods. Note, it took four months to count the offerings which were taken at the start of the 3rd^t month (Pentecost). By the seventh month, the collection, counting and recording of the offering taken was completed; yet by this seventh month (Tabernacles) would be the start of the wheat harvest, of which first fruit would again be offered. This is a powerful illustration of the "ploughman will **overtake** the reaper And the treader of grapes him who sows seed..." : (Amos 9:13a).

NEW TESTAMENT APPLICATIONS OF THE PRINCIPLE OF FIRST FRUITS

In the Greek, ...

First fruits = aparchē = A beginning of sacrifice¹³⁹

Also used of persons superior in excellence to others of the same class¹⁴⁰

God in the New Testament employs the principle of the first fruit to symbolically indicate various spiritual realities. This highlights just how significant the practice of first fruit offerings is. The giving of financial first fruit offerings in itself points to other spiritual principles.

The feeding of the five thousand took place within the context of a young boy GIVING his lunch into the hands of Jesus. The miraculous was activated and during a process of active distribution to meet an urgent need of hunger, the fish and loaves multiplied. This miracle, ignited by an act of GIVING, was to activate and cement a truth much greater than simply the fact that Jesus is miraculous and has power to meet people's needs. He ultimately wanted to reveal His nature as 'Bread of Life' to them and the 'Bread which came down from heaven'. Yet many followed Him only for the fish and loaves and completely missed the whole point. Works of God must also reveal the Word of God; **God's 'performance' –what He does, must always reveal God's 'person' – who He is.**

Similarly, in reference to first fruit offerings, if you fail to see and comprehend the greater and extended application of the principle, you may choose not to observe the practice, or otherwise you may engage in the practice of the principle but not with complete revelation and understanding of the total spiritual ambit and realities it incorporates.

The application of the first fruit principle in the New Covenant refers largely to **'people' being a manifestation of the principle**. This was also true in the Old Covenant, e.g. Jeremiah 2:3a indicates that **"Israel was holiness to the LORD, the first fruits of His increase",** and later the tribe of Levi (Numbers 3:12,41). As already indicated earlier in this chapter, during the Feast of the Sheaf of First Fruit, the first sheaf of ripened barley was waved by the priest before the Lord. The 'sheaf' is indicative of PEOPLE, as is evidenced by the interpretation of Joseph's dream. (Gen.37:5-11). First fruits actually represent the totality and entirety of one's life, spiritual purpose and prophetic destiny.

Here below are seven New Testament references to first fruits categorised in six points. Study them and allow the Spirit of Truth to lead you into the truth that each contains. Brief treatment of these are given here:

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1. <u>Romans 11:16</u> If the <u>first piece</u> of dough is holy, <u>the lump</u> is also; and if <u>the root</u> is holy, <u>the branches</u> are too.

Christ is the first constituent of the 'dough'; we the church are the 'lump'. Christ is the root and vine; we, the church, are the branches. First fruits symbolically are the root of our giving that gives rise to the branches i.e. provides structure and form to other expressions of giving; branches are the part of the tree on which the fruit is borne – hence first fruits provides the capacity for fruit-bearing and reaping the many blessing attendant with giving.

2. James 1:18 In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the <u>word of truth</u>, so that <u>we would be a</u> kind of first fruits among His creatures

'We' here refers to the apex of God's creation, made in His image and likeness; 'His Creatures' is a reference to the rest of the creative order. We will be the first fruits of total redemption, then after us the rest of creation, which groans for this.

- 3. <u>Romans 16:5</u> also greet the church that is in their house. Greet Epaenetus, my beloved, who is <u>the first</u> <u>convert</u> to Christ from Asia.
 - <u>**1** Cor. 16:15-16</u> Now I urge you, brethren (you know the household of Stephanas, that they were <u>the first</u> <u>fruits of Achaia</u>, and that they have devoted themselves for ministry to the saints)

Epaenetus ('laudable')¹⁴¹ and the Household of Stephanus ('crowned')¹⁴² were the first converts in Achaia who are thus representative of the quality of converts to follow from this region. This quality being 'rulers' – crowned – 'laudable' and 'devoted to the ministry of the saints'.

Romans 8:23 And not only this, but also we ourselves, having <u>the first fruits of the Spirit</u>, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body

The phrase 'first fruits of the Spirits' refers to the down-payment or guarantee of the Spirit, i.e. the Spirit **with measure** – but this is a foretaste of the fullness of the Spirit **without measure**. The fullness of a dimension is unattainable without first experiencing the 'first' phase or expression of that dimension. I trust that you can see the relevance and application in reference to giving first fruits.

5. <u>1 Cor. 15:20-26</u> But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the <u>first fruits</u> of those who are asleep. For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also <u>in Christ all will be made alive</u>. But each in his own order: <u>Christ the first fruits</u>, <u>after that those who are Christ's</u> at His coming,

Refer to earlier notes on these verses in this chapter.

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6. <u>Rev. 14:4</u> These are the ones who have <u>not been defiled</u> with women, for they have kept themselves chaste. These *are* the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These have been purchased from among men <u>as first fruits</u> to God and to the Lamb.

The phrase 'not been defiled' alludes to personal practical purity. First fruits has the capacity not just to be depictive of the purity of our lifestyles, but it also has the potential to be representative of the most pure, undefiled financial offering we give.

IS THE GIVING OF FIRST FRUITS RELEVANT AND VALID TODAY ?

The simple answer to this important question is 'YES'. Let me explain by highlighting the following points :

- First fruit giving predates the 'law' and the 'tithe' by thousands of years. It was the most natural response of Abel to God, even before any commandment to do was issued. The fact that it was observed before law implies that it is 'without law' i.e. it is not 'law-based'. This dismantles the anti-first fruits argument that it was practiced under the law, and because we are not under the law, we do not need to observe it.
- Many argue that first fruit giving as well as tithing were practices under the age of the law and is not relevant for today. The law is the school master which leads us to Christ (Galatians 3:24,25). The law was our training ground pointing us to Christ, the fullness of all things. In the natural, a school master trains you for your destiny by installing within your mentality and behaviour, certain elementary principles, upon which are further laid greater and more profound principles for effective function in life. Then, when one successfully functions effortlessly and seamlessly in the execution of a particular task or skill, those principles installed for example, when you studied at elementary school, high school or university, are automatically functional and if properly employed, ensure that success. The basic arithmetic principle of one plus one equates to two is presumed, assumed and subsumed into and is a critical essential component of a Professor of Mathematics' breakthrough in some difficult historical mathematical problem. Things learned in the past are critical building blocks for present and future success.

This analogy is also true in reference to the Old Testament system of giving as a 'shadow' of greater things to come. The New Covenant contains the substance of what the Old Covenant embodied as the shadow. When the substance is attained, the shadow is presumed, assumed and subsumed within the substance. When the substance replaces the shadow, the substance is more substantial than the shadow, as the shadow becomes fulfilled within the substance. Thus, three fold giving inclusive of tithes, first fruits and offerings, as evidence within the Old Testament as a shadow, finds its continuation and substantive expression in our present time.

• The PRINCIPLE of FAITH both ignited and characterised first fruit giving even before law was given. The fact that the examples of first fruit giving predominate in the Old Testament does not preclude the practice today. The law was our school master to bring us to Christ (Gal. 3:24-25). In Christ, who is the fulfillment of the law, principles of the law are upheld and expressed or enacted. The principle of 'sacrifice' was already present before law (Gen. 2); it was operative in the law; and finds unique expression in the New Covenant (Rom 12:1,2); so the idea of 'sacrifice' has not being

More Excellent Giving; Copyright © 2012 Randolph Barnwell. Reproduction in any form is permissible, provided that no monetary profit is gained. [Email: randolph@eternalsound.co.za; rbarnwell@mweb.co.za; Website: www.randolphbarnwell.com; Telephone: (+27) 83 2729 579] abandoned. The same could be argued for first fruits and tithes today. We are not under the law but have expressed faith in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:26). Faith was a core catalyst that ignited acts of giving in the Old Covenant – as recorded for us in the book of Hebrews 11. Thus the principle of faith, which outworks itself through obedience, is today still present in our lives and thus manifests itself in giving as the nation of Israel gave. Abel's first fruit offering was 'BY FAITH'. No law was present, only the principle of faith, which is not based on actual natural external things, but prophetic sight into the unseen realm.

• Absolutely nowhere in the New Testament is first fruits or tithing discounted or prohibited.

Paul powerfully refutes the practice of physical circumcision (Gal 5:6). The writer of the book of Hebrews powerfully argues for the discontinuance of animal sacrifices (Heb. 10:4-7). Both these practices, predated the law, were confirmed in the law, and were contemporaries with first fruits and tithing, yet nowhere does Paul or any other New Testament writer out-rightly argue for the setting aside of the practice of first fruits or tithing. A specific case is made for the invalidity of circumcision and animal sacrifice, but not the tithe or first fruits.

- Jesus was living physically within a time in which the requirements of the law applied. So we assume then that first fruits, tithes and offerings were practiced by Him and His disciples. Far from promoting the discontinuance of the tithe, Jesus insisted that the tithe not be neglected (Matt 23:23; Luke 11:42). If His position was pro-tithe, He certainly was supportive of first fruits although He did not make a clear reference to it. He insisted on honouring Ceasar with taxes and in the same context, enforced the necessity to 'render to God the things which are God's' (Matt. 22:22).
- It is true that Christ is the fulfillment of the principle of first fruit, and so too are we, His church, the church of the firstborn (first fruit) and that everything in God, every actual or natural expression of spiritual realities will ultimately find fulfillment and expression in a 'person'. The 'Word' must become flesh.

For example, we are a 'song unto God' before we actually sing to the Lord – God is more impressed by the song emitted from our righteous lifestyles than our actual vocal singing. Yet this does not negate the necessity to sing. The fact that we live a 'fasted life' according to Isaiah 58 does not set aside the need to actually fast by abstaining from food.

Similarly, the fact that we are the first fruit of God in Christ, does not cancel the necessity for us to practice the giving of first fruits. The actual giving of the offering testifies to the state and quality of the offerer. The gift does not validate the giver, rather the giver validates the gift, i.e. the gift is acceptable because the giver is acceptable. The giver cannot accrue acceptance with God based solely on the gift offered, yet the gift offered is necessary to amplify and testify of the quality of the giver. What you offer and how you offer it to God typifies something of you and what you represent. Abel 'obtained a witness' 'through that which' he offered.

Heb. 11:4By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrificethan Cain, through which he
obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being
dead still speaks

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• All Scripture including the Old Testament is inspired by God and everything written in the Old Covenant was written for our learning and instruction.

<u>2 Tim. 3:16,17</u>	All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for
	training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every
	good work.
<u>1 Cor. 10:6a</u>	Now these things happened as examples for us ,

<u>1 Cor. 10:11</u> Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

When Paul wrote 2 Tim 3:16a, i.e. "ALL Scripture is inspired by God", the actual 'scripture' he was referring to here was the Old Testament, since much of what we consider as the New Testament had not yet being written. In Luke 24, Jesus explained Himself, i.e. 'lead himself out' of the "law, prophets and psalms", terms which are essentially a reference to the entirety of the Old Testament. By doing so, Jesus thus demonstrates the importance and relevance of the Old Testament.

The Old Testament pattern of giving included first fruits, tithes and offerings. This gave structure and order to their giving. Jesus endorsed the tithe in Matthew 23:23. Paul speaks extensively about giving offerings to the Lord, to the saints, to the poor and also to servants or ministers of God. Set men or spiritual fathers, the Old Testament equivalent of which would be the High Priest within the context of our present discussion, received financial support in the New Testament. It would not be an inaccurate assumption that this would include first fruit offerings, since these offerings were designed to provide adequate financial support for the servants of God.

- Abel is the first to offer first fruits in Scripture, and is listed first in the Hebrews 11 record of faith heroes, thereby setting forth a foundation and pattern for all those who would follow him. Abraham, whose steps of faith we are commanded to emulate (Romans 4:12), offered Isaac as his 'firstborn' a kind of first fruit offering to God. We too, today, ought to live in the power and principle of 'first things', seeking 'first His Kingdom' and the actual giving of first fruits becomes a tangible demonstration of this position in the Spirit. Practical outward demonstrations of spiritual positions are necessary.
- In Acts 4, Barnabas, a Levite, brought the entire proceeds from the sale of his property and placed it at the apostles' feet. This for me is reflective of a first fruit offering in that he represents the Levites paying first fruits to the High Priest, as did all the rest of Israel. [This is in fact indicative of much more than a first fruit offering since it represents the entire proceeds of the sale – Barnabas gave 100%]. The apostles here symbolically would represent the High Priest. This money was used to take care of the needs of corporate community such that there was not one needy one among them.

Rom. 15:4 For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

'Honour the Lord with the FIRST of all your increase' – (Prov 3:9b)

Great grace to you!

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Summation of 'First Fruit' Principles

- 1. First fruits, tithes and 'offerings' are three separate and distinct forms of giving that are not synonymous.
- 2. 'More excellent' giving includes first fruits, tithes and offerings.
- 3. The general principle is whatever income represents to you 'first' or 'earliest' should be given as a first fruit.
- 4. First fruits in Scripture is always plural indicating that there is a range of first fruit offerings.
- 5. First fruits in our modern economy, where most individuals are remunerated monthly, represent the first week's income/profit and is not usually recurrent within one cycle of a specific calendar year, except in certain incidences.
- 6. First Fruits refer to the first weekly income/profit or financial fruit/harvest received within a specific category, within a specific calendar year.
- 7. The first week's salary received in a new job should be offered as first fruits as this represents 'a new land'.
- 8. First fruits would include the entire portion of a salary <u>increase</u> in a specific month once off, i.e. the portion of the increment in salary/earnings given only in the first month of the increase.
- 9. For commission based income, the first commission received would constitute the first fruit.
- 10. First fruits should be given from any form of financial receipt within a calendar year, if that receipt of financial income is perpetual and recurrent, i.e. if there is an anticipation or expectation that there would be such financial receipts in the future in that calendar year.
- 11. Whilst an absolute percentage defines the 'tithe', the determination of first fruits is largely governed by what the giver considers 'FIRST' in terms of what income or profit he/she has received. Legalism must not characterise the determination of first fruits, yet at the same token, the determination of the first fruit amount must not be governed by a stingy, frugal or poverty mentality.
- 12. First fruit offerings is symbolically indicative of the totality and the entirety of one's life and spiritual destiny.
- 13. Appearing 'empty-handed' would be suggestive of the fact that God did not bless you. The fact that they are commanded to appear 'full-handed' means that God's blessings was presupposed if they were obedient.
- 14. First fruits must not be abused or misused. Do not destroy or eat your first fruit yourself. Doing so will lead to death in terms of you experiencing God's intended level of perpetual and sustained blessing on your life.

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- 15. The practice of giving first fruits, intended for blessing, sustenance, provision, immunisation from economic famine, etc. can, if misdirected, abused or misused, result in the nullification of the very things it was designed for.
- 16. When we give first fruits, we actively display our acknowledgement and utter dependence on God to secure for us a bountiful future harvest.
- 17. The word 'first' highlights the importance of TIMING. God wants the 'first' not the 'second' or 'third'.
- 18. Whatever period of time represents your calendar year, ensure that in the start of that period, you give to the Lord your first fruits.
- 19. It is biblical to set a specific day aside for the reception of first fruit offerings, advisedly within the first four or five weeks of a specific calendar year.
- 20. The giving of first fruits sets forth the initial act which is the first of a whole series of other expressions and acts of giving , and activates the reaping of tremendous blessings and rewards.
- 21. The foundation of a life of giving and thus blessing is the offering of first fruits.
- 22. The giving of first fruits must be indicative and reflective of the fact that we seek God's Kingdom and His righteousness FIRST that our entire lives, thoughts, actions, decisions, etc. are completely submitted to God's principles and way of doing things.
- 23. If we seek FIRST the kingdom, and His righteousness, all things will be added to us (Matthew 6:33). That which you do and seek FIRST will affect what THINGS will be added.
- 24. Giving our first income to the Lord is a violent and radical demonstration of just how much we esteem and honour God and prioritise His Kingdom.
- 25. When I give first fruits, IN IT is everything else that will follow in the same pattern prophetically picturing giving literally everything I have or will subsequently have.
- 26. The whole idea of first fruits is that it is not the first and last offering, but it is the first of many and more to come. It signifies a hope of a much greater future harvest.
- 27. First fruits act a catalyst in bringing to finish or closure specific aspects of the purposes of God in our lives.
- 28. When we give first fruits as part our general overall commitment to placing God and His will FIRST in all we do, then we have positioned ourselves strategically, to live free from anxiety over whether or not our needs will be taken care of.
- 29. Although the tithe is always more than the first fruits in quantity, the first fruits are the most holy offering. It takes much more faith, love and commitment to give first-fruits than tithing.

¹²³

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- 30. First Fruits bring to bear upon our giving a sense of 'Divine Perfection' as God brings us to maturity in the area of giving.
- 31. First fruits offered to the Lord are actually given to your set-man or spiritual father, as a representative of the Lord in your life.
- 32. First fruits are not to be given to the 'Church' as an institution, but to the person whom God has called to be the primary grace that provides spiritual covering and nourishment to you.
- 33. The present financial standing of the spiritual father does not determine whether or not you should offer him/her your first fruit.
- 34. It is critical that the first fruit be given to the correct person and it must not be misdirected. It must go to your 'Melchisedek' the representative of Christ in your life. This person may redirect the finances to where he deems necessary, eg. to the poor, others in need, his own needs, etc.
- 35. A church corporately should practice the giving of first fruits to the apostle that provides them spiritual oversight.
- 36. The manner in which the first fruit is managed and spent is left to the sole discretion of the one who receives it. Biblically, he/she is allowed to use it for his personal needs (not greed).
- 37. As much as there is tremendous blessing associated with the first fruit offering on the part of the GIVER of the first fruit, there is also a potential severe judgment attendant with it on the part of the RECIPIENT if the money is not managed and spent in a way which ultimately honours the Lord.
- 38. First fruits have the effect of anchoring an abiding blessing on the 'house'.
- 39. When you give first fruits to your 'spiritual father', the first fruit becomes a tangible sign and symbol of your permanent covenant with him as a spiritual son, and it is also emblematic of the fact that his grace and anointing becomes mixed into your life through impartation, thereby flavouring and enhancing your life with that which God has richly endowed him.
- 40. "Honour the Lord from your wealth and from the FIRST OF ALL your produce; So your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine."
- 41. First fruit blessing includes a blessing of success upon any engagement at creative entrepreneurial or business endeavours.
- 42. The giver of first fruit is ideally postured to access greater revelation from the Father. Revelation (wine) will burst forth and overflow in your life.
- 43. The receipt of first fruit offerings by your spiritual father will release an abundant supply both naturally and spiritually, upon the entire corporate community of true sons in the house.
- 44. The observation of the practice of first fruits will immunise you from lack in times of economic recession or economic depression.

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- 45. God's redemptive work will be swiftly facilitated when we bring perfection to the area of our financial giving in reference to our spiritual fathers by observing the practice of first fruit.
- 46. Like Abel offered the firstlings of his livestock and their fat portions <u>by faith</u>, faith, which has got to do with an accurate, penetrative and insightful 'perspective' of God, His will and purposes in the earth must characterize first fruit giving.
- 47. Prophetic 'sight' and understanding is essential when we offer first fruits. You have got to see the significance and weighted-ness attached to what you are presenting to the Lord.
- 48. God regards giver of first fruits and the first fruits itself, with approval, appreciation and favour.
- 49. The one whose first fruit offering finds acceptance and regard from the Lord will begin to operate beyond the limitations of what his natural circumstances dictate and prescribe.
- 50. First fruit giving positions us, allowing God to amplify and extend our VOICE our influence to realms, places, jurisdictions and people we may not physically venture to or physically encounter.
- 51. The measure of your revelation will determine the quantity and quality of your giving. But also, your handling of finances will either have a positive or negative effect on your measure of revelation and spiritual insight.
- 52. There is significant correlation between the principle of 'first things', the 'apostolic', 'graceimpartation' and 'spiritual fathering-sonship' in Scripture.
- 53. First fruits symbolically indicate and point to various significant spiritual realities.
- 54. If you fail to see and comprehend the greater and extended application of the first fruit principle, you may not observe the practice, or otherwise you may engage in the practice but not with complete revelation and understanding of the total ambit and realities it incorporates.

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First Fruits

Questions and Issues for Personal Review and Group Discussion

- Offer two concise and succinct definitions of first fruits.
 The first must be in reference to ancient Israel's agrarian economy, and the second in reference to our modern day secular economic society.
- 2. Which is the first recorded example of a first fruit offering in the Bible?
- 3. Using Exodus 23:19, 34:26 and Deut. 14:21, highlight the seriousness of first fruits.
- 4. Five factors highlight the significance of first fruits. Discuss these.
- 5. Are first fruits and tithes a reference to the same thing?
- 6. What constitutes 'more excellent giving'?
- 7. How should a working person earning a monthly salary determine their first fruit?
- 8. How should a 'Kingdom Business' determine the first fruit?
- 9. What are some areas in which the giving of first fruits should be observed?
- 10. Who is the recipient of a first fruit offering?
- 11. What general caution does the Scripture offer in reference to mismanaging first fruits by the one who receives the first fruits?
- 12. Catalogue several examples in Scripture of instances in which first fruits were offered, noting the following: a. Who offered the first fruit.
 - b. Who received the first fruit the name and also the position or function of the person.
 - c. The specific conditions or context in which the first fruit was offered.
 - d. The effect produced because the first fruit was given.
- 13. Demonstrate the critical linkage between 'first fruits', 'grace' and 'spiritual fathering'.
- 14. Notable financial reformation took place in the day of Nehemiah and Hezekiah. Discuss the key elements or features of these reformations relative to finance.
- 15. Seven broad references to first fruit exist in the New Testament. These are depictive of greater and more profound spiritual realities beyond the physical giving of actual financial first fruits. This does not discount the giving of financial first fruits, but highlights the fact that

those who observe financial first fruits, position themselves for entry into something spiritual which the first fruit points to. The incident of the feeding of the five thousand illustrates this. Two fish and five loaves of bread offered by a young boy was multiplied to more than adequately supply the need for food. But this incident of giving and the subsequent supply of their need was employed by Jesus to unveil a specific aspect of His Divine nature to them, that He is the 'Bread of Life. Attempt to demonstrate how the giving of first fruits has a bearing upon each of the seven occurrences of the application of the first fruit principle in the New Testament.

16. Are you convinced that the giving of first fruits is a relevant and acceptable practice for sons of God today?

Personal Notes on 'God's Kingdom Economy'			

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Tithing The tithe is holy to the Lord. Lev. 27:30

ithing is the regular practice of setting apart the first tenth (10%) of the your monthly gross earnings or any other receipt of financial gifts, for God.

Hebrew Words	:	Maaser	= 'a tenth'	('To tithe' = Asar	= 'to give a tenth') ¹⁴³
Greek Words	:	Dekatoor	= 'tenth'	('To tithe' = Apodekat	oo = 'to give a tenth') ¹⁴⁴

It is God's way of regular and systematic giving for every Christian to follow. Honouring the principle of the tithe is a very practical way in which we exhibit our deep reverence and fear for God – as well as our utter dependence on Him and acknowledgement of Him as the source of all our blessing. For the nation of Israel, giving the tithe to God was no threat to security. In fact it showed confidence in God that it is He who made the land produce. It signified an acknowledgement that all fruitfulness, growth and productivity of the land and animals came from the Lord. As a token of this acknowledgement God commanded that ten percentage be given back to Him. Underlying the tithe was the basic idea that the 'earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof' (Psalm 24:1). Everything comes from God, and therefore everything belongs to Him. In the previous chapter on FIRST FRUITS, I set forth reasons why I believe that first fruits is a valid contemporary practice. The reader is encouraged to review this before proceeding.

RECORDED INCIDENTS OF TITHING



We will now review each of these incidents, examine the scriptural reference associated with each incident, and extrapolate from it, the principles to observe or practice. Some principles are repetitive.

1) ABRAHAM'S EXAMPLE OF TITHING

Genesis 14:18-20

And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he **gave him tithes of all**.

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PRINCIPLE 1 : TITHING WAS NEVER MEANT TO BE A LEGAL OBLIGATION, BUT A VOLUNTARY PRIVILEGE

Tithing started before the Law was given under Moses. Tithing is at least 430 years older than the Law. Genesis 14:12-17 records that Abraham had just won a great battle over certain kings in rescuing his nephew, Lot, and gathered a large amount of the spoil. He then offers 10% of all he gathered to Melchisedek, his spiritual oversight. This specific expression of tithing is dealt with more comprehensively in the next chapter, 'The Melchisidek Tithe'. Abraham was not functioning under the law. Abraham was not responding to any external commandment imposed upon him. We do not tithe out of a sense of coercion, manipulation or legal obligation. It should be our greatest voluntary, instinctive and most natural response to tithe.

PRINCIPLE 2 : WE TITHE TO A PERSON, NOT AN INSTITUTION

Without any external command, Abraham tithed instinctually and reflexively to someone who was an accurate representation of God in his life. Note that Melchisidek blessed Abraham. Hebrews 7 indicates that the greater (Melchisedek) blessed the lesser (Abraham).

Hebrews 7:7 But without any dispute the lesser is blessed by the greater.

The source that nourishes and blesses you spiritually should be the source to which you tithe from your regular and any extraordinary or unusual attainment of income – this is discussed more fully in the next chapter. Abraham's tithe left his hands and went into someone else's hands. Abraham tithed personally to Melchisedek. It is my view that Melchisedek was still alive in Isaac's lifetime, and so Isaac would have followed the footsteps of his father and did the same. The corporate nation of Israel tithed personally to the Levites – tithes were always meant to sustain a person or people, who as accurate representations of God devote themselves to the work of God, serving the people of God. Paul too, received financial offerings in his personal capacity from individuals and whole church groups (Phil 4:16; 2 Cor. 8:4; 1 Cor.9:11)

PRINCIPLE 3 :ALTHOUGH WE DO NOT TITHE PRIMARILY TO SECURE A BLESSING BUT TO GIVE
ACKNOWLEDGMENT TO GOD AS THE SOURCE OF ALL BLESSING AND VICTORY,
TITHING IS A CATALYST THAT SUSTAINS A CYCLE OF BLESSING.

Abraham did not tithe to secure some future reward or blessing. He simply acted spontaneously to bless Melchisidek in acknowledgement of God who afforded him victory in battle. Abraham tithed after he had gained the victory, not before. He functioned in God's blessed-ness and favour over his life. He tithes in acknowledgement of his blessed state and not to secure a blessing, although Melchisidek blessed

Without any external command, Abraham tithed instinctually and reflexively to someone who was an accurate representation of God in his life.

him afterwards. This cuts across the popular teaching today which places undue emphasis on tithing as a means to manipulate God to gain specific victories. Having said that though, financial giving, especially tithing, is one of the God-ordained means through which He is able to secure a life of blessing for His children, but our motivation in giving must transcend the attitude that one only gives in expectation of some divine reward, to the place where we tithe in simple obedience to the Lord's command. "In the past

we taught, 'Give to Get'; then 'Give to Give'; now the emphasis is simply 'GIVE!'" (Thamo Naidoo). Tithing will definitely bring with it a series of blessings which we will discuss later, but these are natural consequences of our financial obedience. Our desire in tithing is to honour God, gratefully acknowledge HIS blessing in our lives and His continued blessing over us. Tithing is a key that maintains the state of blessedness in the life of the believer. From an already blessed position, Abraham tithed to Melchisedek. At that impartation of the blessing, Abraham offers tithes to him. It seems then that the tithe is a **key catalyst that ensures the cycle of blessing.** Principle number six later in this chapter provides further explanation of this issue.

The tithe is a key catalyst that sustains the cycle of blessing.

This principle is also demonstrated in Hezekiah's Reformation of Israel. Note in 2 Chronicles 31, King Hezekiah authoritatively commanded that Israel give first fruits to the High Priest and tithes to the Levites.

2 Chronicles 31:3-10

- 3 He also appointed the king's portion of his goods for the burnt offerings, namely, for the morning and evening burnt offerings, and the burnt offerings for the sabbaths and for the new moons and for the fixed festivals, as it is written in the law of the Lord.
- 4 Also <u>HE COMMANDED THE PEOPLE</u> who lived in Jerusalem to give <u>the portion due to the priests and the</u> <u>Levites</u>, that they might <u>DEVOTE themselves to the law of the Lord</u>.
- 5 <u>AS SOON AS THE ORDER SPREAD</u>, the sons of Israel **provided in abundance** the **first fruits** of grain, new wine, oil, honey and of all the produce of the field; and they **brought in abundantly the tithe of all.**
- 6 The sons of Israel and Judah who lived in the cities of Judah also brought in the <u>tith</u>e of oxen and sheep, and the <u>tithe</u> of sacred gifts which were <u>consecrated to the Lord their God</u>, and <u>placed them in heaps.</u>
- 7 In the third month they began to make the <u>heaps</u>, and finished them by the <u>seventh month</u>.
- 8 When Hezekiah and the rulers came and saw the heaps, **they blessed the Lord AND HIS PEOPLE ISRAEL.**
- 9 Then <u>Hezekiah questioned</u> the priests and the Levites <u>concerning the heaps</u>.
- 10 Azariah the chief priest of the house of Zadok said to him, "Since the contributions began to be brought into the house of the Lord, <u>we have had enough to eat with plenty left over</u>, for the <u>LORD BLESSED HIS PEOPLE</u>, and <u>this great quantity is left over</u>."

Careful examination of this passage reveals the following:

- A significantly huge tithe was given because of widespread corporate financial obedience.
- This testified to the degree to which God has blessed the nation : See verse 10 : "for the Lord has blessed His people"
- So the people gave from a position of blessedness.
- <u>After</u> they gave, Hezekiah, as a human representative of the principle of fathering over the nation, and thus a representation of God Himself, **blesses the people further**: see verse 8 "Hezekiah ... <u>blessed the Lord AND HIS PEOPLE ISRAEL.</u>
- Thus, although 'blessed', their giving opened the door to the next cycle of practical expressed blessing in their lives. Positional blessedness, being blessed with all spiritual blessing in Christ, must translate itself into practical blessing. The tithe is key in this process.

According to Romans 4:11-16, Abraham, 'the father of us all' (v.12 and 16), is a pattern for the Church to follow. This includes his example on giving tithes ('walk in the steps of that faith'- v. 12).

Romans 4:11,12

- 11 and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, so that he might be <u>the father of all</u> who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be credited to them,
- 12 and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also <u>follow in the steps</u> of the faith of our father Abraham which he had while uncircumcised.

2) JACOB'S EXAMPLE OF TITHING

Jacob, Abraham's grandson, became a refugee because of the way he had tricked Isaac, his father, and Esau, his brother. He left Canaan and went to Mesopotamia to seek his fortune. In Genesis 28, he has a dream in which he sees a ladder set on the earth reaching heaven with angels ascending and descending upon it. God then affirms to him His commitment to fulfill the promise made to Abraham; he also recognizes the awesome presence of God in the place and trembles with fear. In response to God's reassurance of His presence with him, Jacob then makes this vow to God:

	<u>Genesis 28:18-22</u>
18	So Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on its top.
19	He called the name of that place Bethel ; however, previously the name of the city had been <u>Luz</u> .
20	Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will keep me on this
	journey that I take, and will give me food to eat and garments to wear,
21	and I return to my father's house in safety, then the Lord will be my God.
22	"This stone, which I have set up as a pillar, will be God's house, and of all that You
	give me I will surely give a tenth to You."

PRINCIPLE 4 : THE TITHE SETS FORTH A FOUNDATION FOR GOD'S WORK IN OUR LIVES TO ADVANCE TO MATURITY BOTH IN TERMS OF PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE PURSUIT OF HIS WILL

Jacob's name means 'supplanter'.¹⁴⁵ At his birth, he came out of the womb grasping the heel of his twin brother, Esau, thereby prefiguring that the blessing of the first born son would be his. At his birth it was even prophesied that the older will serve the younger. The blessing of the first born son was always going to be his portion. But he went about it the wrong way, because his nature, as indicated in his name, had not being changed yet. He tricked his brother out of his birthright by exploiting his state of hunger and thus suggested that he trade his birthright for a bowl of lentils. He then assumes Esau's identity, deceiving his aged and blind father, who imparted the blessing.

Now, here in Genesis 28, he has a supernatural encounter with God, and trembles with fear because he engages the awesome level of God's presence with a deficient and carnal nature. He even says that God was present and he did not even know it. After God re-echoed to him the promises made to Abraham and Isaac, he now makes this vow to God that **IF** GOD responds favourably to him, that he will tithe of all he has

to Him. In this he is clearly manifesting his carnal nature – his propensity to enter into bargaining and negotiation. He only promises to tithe if God takes care of him.

N.B.: His vow to tithe to God, 'if God' would be with him, can also be seen positively as his way of emphasising his own personal commitment to the covenant promise of God to him – see more on this later in this chapter.

If we analyse the details of Jacob's words in his commitment to tithe in Genesis 28:20,21, we can clearly see some of the benefits that tithing affords us, as well as what the tithe prophetically indicates (these are demonstrated through some of the tithing principles that follow):

-	The Promise of God's Abiding Presence	:	" <u>If God</u> will be with me"
-	The Promise of Divine Protection	:	"will keep me on this journey that I take"
-	The Promise of Divine <u>Provision</u>	:	"and will give me food to eat and garments to wear"
-	The Fufillment of Personal Divine Mandate	:	"and I return to my father's house in safety,
-	An Expression of Singular Devotion and Loyalty to God	:	"the Lord will be my God"
-	Symbolic Expression of Building God's House/Church	:	"This stone, which I have set up as a pillar, will be God's house"

After this vow to tithe, Jacob spent twenty years working for Laban, and in this period there is no record of him tithing. During this period of his life, he does not experience the fullness of blessings listed above, although God protected him based on his initial vow to tithe. There was also the absence of God's direct speaking to him.

Nevertheless, God still blessed and prospered him.

Genesis 30:43So the man became exceedingly prosperous, and had large flocks and female and male
servants and camels and donkeys.

In Genesis 32, Jacob has to confront Esau and deal with the consequences of his deceit many years earlier. To appease the raging anger of Esau toward him, he prepares an offering and sends the gift ahead before actually engaging Esau. This offering is symbolic of the tithe. The tithe does protect and avert disaster in one's life.

Genesis 32:13-16 (KJV)

- 13 And he lodged there that same night; and took of that which came to his hand a present for Esau his brother;
- 14 Two hundred she goats, and twenty he goats, two hundred ewes, and twenty rams,
- 15 Thirty milch camels with their colts, forty kine, and ten bulls, twenty she asses, and ten foals.
- 16 And he delivered *them* into the hand of his servants, every drove by themselves; and said unto his servants, Pass over before me, and put a space betwixt drove and drove.

Genesis 32:20,21

and you shall say, 'Behold, your servant Jacob also is behind us.'" For he said, "I will appease him with the present that goes before me. Then afterward I will see his face; perhaps he will accept me." So the present passed on before him, while he himself spent that night in the camp. Before finally confronting Esau, Jacob has a life-changing divine encounter, wrestling with an angel of the Lord, and demands that he be blessed. He is so tenacious and bent on receiving the blessing – that he wrestles all night and finally prevails, receiving a blessing from this angel. Before the angel blesses him, he asks Jacob his name. 'Names' in Scripture speak of destiny or character/nature. The angel was asking Jacob to acknowledge his deceitful and conniving nature. Before he proceeds into further blessing with God, he has to come to terms with who he is, **viz. Jacob, meaning 'supplanter'.** Once Jacob does this, his name is changed to **Israel, meaning 'One who prevails with God'**¹⁴⁶, he is then blessed.

PRINCIPLE 5 : WE TITHE TO GOD BY GIVING THE TITHE TO THOSE WHO REPRESENT THE 'FACE OF GOD' IN THE 'HOUSE OF GOD'.

Jacob called that place **Peniel**, which means 'the face of God'¹⁴⁷. In Genesis 28, where he had the vision of the ladder, the prophetic promise rehearsed to him, and his vow to tithe if God would be with him - he called that place **Bethel**, meaning 'the House of God'.¹⁴⁸ It is possible to be in the House of God and respond to God based on the blessings of His HOUSE – His church – yet not know the face of God – the essence of HIS being and nature.

Jacob was accurately positioned in that he was the grandson of Abraham and the son of Isaac. Yet this placement, with a carnal nature, caused him to engage God not based on personal revelation of and commitment to God, but based on the privilege of the blessed ancestry. Even though in this state, and

When we give tithes to the 'God of the House of God', we are primarily giving it to the spiritual leaders who represent the 'face of God' in the 'House of God'.

blessed of God by virtue of the promises made to Abraham, he still had to enter personally into engaging God relationally on a private level, and appropriating the promise for himself. Thus, when he meets God in Genesis 32, he wrestles with him to personally appropriate the blessing of Abraham – and he secures it when he allows God to change his nature from a 'supplanter/deceiver' to 'one who has power with God'. When this happens he calls that place Peniel, which means 'the face of God'. **He had transitioned from the 'House of God' to the 'Face of God'.** The 'House of God' must always reveal the 'Face of God'. The 'face of God' is the nature and character of God, which is fundamentally rooted and structured within the 'fatherson dynamic. In and through this dynamic of fathers and sons, the purposes of God find legitimacy and efficient and powerful execution in the earth.

In Genesis 33, Jacob reconciled with Esau by actually sending to him a significantly large offering, because he perceived the face of Esau AS THE FACE OF GOD.

<u>Gen. 33:10,11</u> Jacob said, "No, please, if now I have found favor in your sight, then take my present from my hand, for <u>I see your face as one sees the face of God</u>, and you have received me favorably. "Please <u>take</u> <u>my gift</u> which has been brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me and because I have plenty." Thus he urged him and he took *it*.

Here again is emphasised the important principle, that the destination of financial gifts should be those who represent the FACE or the nature of God. Jacob refers to Esau as 'lord' (Ex 33:13-14). He expresses honour and respect to him. He had seen the face of God whilst wrestling with the angel of the Lord in Genesis 32, and now in Genesis 33, he sees the face of God as represented in his brother.

One might argue that Esau was far from an accurate representation of the nature of God, since he exhibited carnality and disobedience. This may be true. Yet God was at work in Jacob's life using Esau as one whom Jacob had to confront and reconcile with. Leading up to this confrontation and reconciliation, were deep divine processes afoot that had to transpire in Jacob's life. These processes were activated and ignited by the certainty of him having to deal with Esau. In this context, Esau represented the face of God. Later **in Genesis 35**, Jacob comes back to Bethel and renames it **'El-bethel'**, which means **'the God of the House of God'**.¹⁴⁹ It also means **'strong house of God'**.¹⁵⁰ When the face of God (the nature and character of God) is evident in the house of God, the house becomes strong.

Looking at Jacob's story in a Positive Light:

In Genesis 28:19-22, Jacob reveals <u>WHERE WE SHOULD TITHE</u>. He equates this entire experience as '**THE HOUSE OF GOD'**, calling the place 'Bethel', the house of God. Today we bring our tithes to the storehouse – our local Church. But as was highlighted, he renames it **El-Bethel** – **the God of the House of God**. He transitioned form the 'House of God' to the 'Face of God' to the 'God of the House of God'. Within the context of beholding 'the face of God', his nature was transformed (2 Cor.3:18). He can now appreciate the representation of the face/nature of God within the 'house of God'.

We must not tithe with the mindset of tithing to our local churches as an institution, but to the God of the house. And the House of God, equated to the 'storehouse' in Malachi 3, is a reference to the spiritual resource and nourishment that one receives from that house, which essentially is embodied in the spiritual father over the house.

Thus when we give tithes to the God of the House of God, which is comprised of fathers and sons, we are primarily giving it to the spiritual leaders who represent the 'face of God' in the House of God. Also the House of God is not the building where we gather, but it is the people – the living stones which together constitute the church. More than using the tithe for paying bills and expenses that the church incurs, first and foremost, the personnel who provide 'bread and wine' should be honoured financially. As will be seen later in this chapter, tithes were used for taking care of the Levites who ministered. **People, and not assets, must be the priority.**

	<u>Gen. 28:13-15; 18-22</u>
13	And behold, the LORD stood above it and said, "I am the LORD, the God of
	your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will
	give it to you and to your descendants.
14	"Your descendants will also be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread
	out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you
	and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed.
15	"Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring
	you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have
	promised you."
18	So Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put under
	his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on its top.
19	He called the name of that place Bethel ; however, previously the name of the
	city had been <u>Luz</u> .
20	Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will keep me on
	this journey that I take, and will give me food to eat and garments to wear,
21	and I return to my father's house in safety, then the Lord will be my God.
22	
22	"This stone, which I have set up as a pillar, will be <u>God's house</u> , and of <u>all that</u>
	You give me I will surely give a tenth to You."

PRINCIPLE 6 : THE TITHE IS A COVENANT CONNECTOR AND COVENANT ACTIVATOR

Rehearse principle three before proceeding. Jacob lives within the broader context of a covenant agreement that God made with his grandfather Abraham (Gen. 12). This promise was passed on to Isaac, his father. Jacob has now got to perpetuate this legacy of covenant. Jacob vowed to tithe in response to God's prophetically declared covenantal promise (Gen. 28:2-22).

God reiterated His covenant characteristic and nature (Gen. 28:13-15). By rehearsing the Abrahamic promise He is reinforcing the fact that He is a God of covenant, who will not swerve from His commitments. Jacob responds similarly with a strong commitment to tithe (Scripture uses an intense word – 'vow'). As I have already indicated, Jacob's "if God will be with me" can also not be seen as an attempt to manipulate with the tithe, but a response emphasising his part of the covenant. Today, tithing is not optional nor something we choose to engage in at specific times of our lives when it is convenient to do so, but we become bound by a sense of strong covenant commitment to God in our tithing. The tithe becomes a key "covenant connector and covenant activator"¹⁵¹ (Dr Basil Tryon).

Jacob commits to tithe within the context of the larger prophetic purpose of the Lord. His tithing is an integral part of the fulfillment of God's global plan for the 'families of the earth' to be blessed (Gen. 28:14). Today, our tithing must not be viewed as a separate act apart from the macro-plan of God for our lives, our local church and the nations of the earth. It becomes key as a facilitator of the unfolding will of God for the entire world.

At Jacob's return to Bethel in Genesis 35, God reinforces all the prophetic promises given to him and reaffirms the fact of his changed nature by rehearsing the fact that his name had been changed from Jacob to Israel.

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Genesis 35:7-15

- 7 He built an altar there, and called the place <u>EI-bethel</u>, because there God had revealed Himself to him when he fled from his brother.
- 8 Now Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died, and she was buried below Bethel under the oak; it was named Allonbacuth.
- 9 Then God appeared to Jacob again when he came from Paddan-aram, and He blessed him.
- 10 God said to him, "Your name is Jacob; You shall no longer be called Jacob, But Israel shall be your name." Thus He called him Israel.
- 11 God also said to him, "I am God Almighty; Be fruitful and multiply; A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, And kings shall come forth from you.
- 12 "The land which I gave to Abraham and Isaac, I will give it to you, And I will give the land to your descendants after you."
- 13 Then God went up from him in the place where He had spoken with him.
- 14 Jacob set up a pillar in the place where He had spoken with him, a pillar of stone, and he poured out a drink offering on it; he also poured oil on it.
- 15 So Jacob named the place where God had spoken with him, <u>Bethel.</u>

Note here – the covenantal promise originally given to Abraham and Isaac is again re-echoed to Jacob. He is now not just correctly positioned as a recipient of divine prophetic promise and destiny simply because of his placement as a son of Isaac and grandson of Abraham, but he has now personally engaged and appropriated this blessing for himself. He has complied with the dealings of God in his life. His carnal nature is changed to be like God – for he has seen the face of God and has become transformed (2 Cor. 3:18). He has also reconciled with his estranged brother. All his relationships are right. He has seen the face of God in the house of God. NOW, God blesses him (v.9) personally, and this validates him as a worthy recipient of divine blessings and a faithful steward of divine purposes. All of these events could be traced back to his commitment to tithe, and also to his re-commitment to tithe in that he presented a financial gift to one in whom he saw the face of God.

In this, the second appearance of God to him at Bethel (Gen. 35) after releasing his tribute, he is now the head of a nation – he is no longer poor but wealthy, and his twelfth son is about to be born. Previously God met him in a dream (Gen.28). Now he meets God in reality. God literally appeared to him (Gen 35:9). **The dream becomes reality**. **His breakthrough could be traced to his offering.** Covenantal rights and promises become activated by the tithe. The tithe is key to making dreams become reality.

PRINCIPLE 7 : TITHING PRESERVES AND PROTECTS US ECONOMICALLY

Jacob promised to tithe faithfully to the Lord. Genesis 28:22: "of <u>all that You give me I will surely give a tenth</u> to You."

This **VOW** to tithe was a serious commitment. Because of this God protected Jacob from being defrauded by Laban, his father-in-law, who had deceived him earlier. Note the account below and the emphasis that God gives to Jacob's VOW of tithing.

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Genesis 31:1-13

- 1 Now Jacob heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, "Jacob has taken away all that was our father's, and from what belonged to our father he has made all this wealth."
- 2 Jacob saw the attitude of Laban, and behold, it was not friendly toward him as formerly.
- 3 Then the Lord said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you."
- 4 So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to his flock in the field,
- 5 and said to them, "<u>I see your father's attitude, that it is not friendly toward m</u>e as formerly, but the God of my father has been with me.
- 6 "You know that I have served your father with all my strength.
- 7 "Yet <u>your father has cheated me and changed my wages ten times</u>; however, God did not allow him to hurt me.
- 8 "If he spoke thus, 'The speckled shall be your wages,' then all the flock brought forth speckled; and if he spoke thus, 'The striped shall be your wages,' then all the flock brought forth striped.
- 9 "Thus God has taken away your father's livestock and given them to me.
- 10 "And it came about at the time when the flock were mating that I lifted up my eyes and saw in a dream, and behold, the male goats which were mating were striped, speckled, and mottled.
- 11 "Then the angel of God said to me in the dream, 'Jacob,' and I said, 'Here I am.'
- 12 "He said, 'Lift up now your eyes and see that all the male goats which are mating are striped, speckled, and mottled; for I have seen all that Laban has been doing to you.
- 13 'I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar, <u>WHERE YOU MADE A VOW TO ME</u>; now arise, leave this land, and creturn to the land of your birth.' "

God protected Jacob from ten attempts of Laban to defraud him financially. Although Laban attempted to cheat him financially, changing his wages ten times, yet God protected him supernaturally. In highlighting His knowledge of how fraudulently Laban attempts to deal with Jacob, God mentions his vow to tithe. This is not coincidental. God rebukes the 'devourer' on behalf of the one who tithes – see principle number twenty seven below. Twenty years later Jacob testifies of the blessings of God upon him:

Genesis 32:9,10

- 9 Jacob said, "O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O Lord, who said to me, 'Return to your country and to your relatives, and <u>I will prosper you</u>,'
- 10 I am unworthy of <u>all the lovingkindness</u> and of all the <u>faithfulnes</u>s which You have shown to Your servant; for with <u>my staff</u> only I crossed this Jordan, and now <u>I have become two companies</u>.

Jacob left with one staff in his hand but returned with two groups, a very large family and tremendous wealth, having his every need met. Why? Amongst other things, it was his faithfulness in tithing.

3. <u>THE NATION OF ISRAEL'S EXAMPLE OF TITHING</u>

Tithing started before the law and was confirmed in the law. It is important to bear in mind in this section that while we extrapolate certain principles governing tithing from the context where people operated under the law of Moses, that today, we do not tithe in the spirit of law, **but in the spirit of grace**. Also we do not tithes as slaves, but as SONS of God. Our tithe to the Lord becomes a celebration of our sonship and privileged position as the heirs of God. We do not tithe to receive something from God. Our conviction is that we are already blessed and have everything now.

Ephesians 1:3Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual
blessing in the heavenly places in Christ

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Note the Following Scriptures and the Principles Extracted:

	Leviticus 27:30-32
30	'Thus all the tithe of the land, of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the
	Lord's; it is holy to the Lord.
31	'If, therefore, a man wishes to redeem part of his tithe, he shall add to it one-fifth of it.
32	'For every tenth part of herd or flock, whatever passes under the rod, the tenth one shall
	be holy to the Lord

PRINCIPLE 8 : A TITHE OF 'ALL' INCOME WAS EXPECTED

Note verse 30a : "'Thus all the tithe of the land, of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree ...".

A tithe of ALL was expected – land, seed, fruit, herd and flock. This signifies the all-encompassing nature of the tithe. Israel was an agricultural community and so God speaks in agricultural terms to them. Today, we are remunerated or rewarded for the contribution of our labour in terms of the skills, abilities and talents our employers require for a specific period of time e.g. a week or month. Our monetary wage or salary, or business profit represents not only our abilities, but our time as well. So when we bring our tithe to the Lord, it represents a token (10%) of the entirety of our lives, abilities and time.

Eccles. 5:19,20

- 19 Here is what I have seen to be good and fitting: to eat, to drink and enjoy oneself in all one's labor in which he toils under the sun during the few years of his life which God has given him; for this is <u>his reward.</u>
- 20 Furthermore, as for every man to whom <u>God has given riches and wealth</u>, He has also empowered him to eat from them and <u>to receive his reward</u> and rejoice in his labor; <u>this is the gift of God</u>.

The ability to work and generate an income or to create wealth from business is given by God and is a gift from God. Any form of finances received as a result of labour or the use of your skill and talent is subject to the tithe.

PRINCIPLE 9 : THE TITHE BELONGS TO THE LORD

Note verse 30b: "'Thus all the tithe of the land, ..., is the Lord's".

The tithe belongs to the Lord. All of our possessions and finances belong to the Lord - 100% belongs to Him. As an expression of this ownership of all we possess, God only calls for 10% and gives us stewardship over the 90%. Thus when we tithe, we are simply returning to God that which is rightly His; **tithes are returned**, **offerings are given**. The concept of 'MY tithes' / 'YOUR tithes' is unscriptural - it is GOD'S TITHE. The tithe

which you bring to the servants of the Lord which function in the local church BELONGS TO THE LORD. Thus when we 'give' tithes, we are simply 'returning' it to the Lord. Consider how that the offering given to Eleazar is described as the 'Lord's offering' (Numbers 31:41).

PRINCIPLE 10 : THE TITHE IS HOLY UNTO THE LORD

Note verse 30c: "Thus all the tithe of the land, ... it is holy to the Lord."

The tithe is HOLY unto the Lord. The activity of tithing and the tithe itself is sacred unto the Lord. It is an act of obedience that is holy, hence it must be viewed with 'respect and reverence' as it is ultimately presented to the Lord. Tithing must never become a mere carnal bringing of an inanimate measure of value (money) to a Church. God is holy and that which is presented to Him must be holy also. This highlights the reverential attitude with which we should tithe.

The word 'holy' also indicates that which is set apart for specific divine use. The tithe is holy in that it is to be set aside for divine purposes vested within those He has called to manage and administrate His purposes, transmitted in and through His 'house'.

	Numbers 18:20-32
20	Then the Lord said to Aaron, "You shall have no inheritance in their land nor own any portion
	among them; I am your portion and your inheritance among the sons of Israel.
21	"To the sons of Levi, behold, I have given all the tithe in Israel for an inheritance, in return
	for their service which they perform, the service of the tent of meeting.
22	"The sons of Israel shall not come near the tent of meeting again, or they will bear sin and
	die.
23	"Only the Levites shall perform the service of the tent of meeting, and they shall bear their
	iniquity; it shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generations, and among the sons of
	Israel they shall have no inheritance.
24	"For the tithe of the sons of Israel, which they offer as an offering to the Lord, I have given
	to the Levites for an inheritance; therefore I have said concerning them, 'They shall have no
	inheritance among the sons of Israel.' "
25	Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,
26	"Moreover, you shall speak to the Levites and say to them, 'When you take from the sons of
	Israel the tithe which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then you shall
	present an offering from it to the Lord, a tithe of the tithe.
27	'Your offering shall be reckoned to you as the grain from the threshing floor or the full
	produce from the wine vat .
28	'So you shall also present an offering to the Lord from your tithes, which you receive from
	the sons of Israel; and from it you shall give the Lord's offering to Aaron the priest.
29	'Out of all your gifts you shall present every offering due to the Lord, from all the best of
	them, the sacred part from them.'
30	"You shall say to them, 'When you have offered from it the best of it, then the rest shall be
	reckoned to the Levites as the product of the threshing floor, and as the product of the wine
	vat.
31	'You may eat it anywhere, you and your households, for it is your compensation in return
	for your service in the tent of meeting.
32	'You will bear no sin by reason of it when you have offered the best of it. But you shall not
	profane the sacred gifts of the sons of Israel, or you will die.' "

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PRINCIPLE 11 : TITHES ARE TO BE USED TO SUSTAIN THOSE WHO WORK IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD, MOST ESPECIALLY, THOSE THAT PROVIDE SPIRITUAL NOURISHMENT

Note verse 21 :"To the sons of Levi, behold, I have given all the tithe in Israel for an inheritance, in
return for their service which they perform, the service of the tent of meeting.

The Old Testament tithe was used to maintain the Levites for two reasons :

- (a) When the tribes of Israel possessed the Promised land, the Levites were not given any district to inherit like the other tribes.
- (b) The tithe was their reward for their service in the tabernacle (see 2 Chronicles 31:4).

The Levites were the ministering priesthood to Israel. Strictly applied today, tithes collected should be used **primarily** for the salaries of the set-man, and other ministry or administrative staff personnel employed by the Church. The 'Levites' were to minister without interruption or undue concern for their material wellbeing. Those who provide spiritual nourishment through the Word to God's people should be adequately and significantly remunerated so that they are not distracted by undue concern for their own material needs. This is biblical and proper. Note in the verse quoted below, Hezekiah calls the nation to resource the ministering priesthood <u>SO THAT</u> 'they might <u>DEVOTE</u> themselves to the <u>law of the Lord</u>." The order was obeyed and the priests were more than sufficiently taken care of materially.

2 Chron 31:4-5,10

- 4 Also <u>HE COMMANDED THE PEOPLE</u> who lived in Jerusalem to give <u>the portion due to the priests and the</u> <u>Levites</u>, that they might <u>DEVOTE themselves to the law of the Lord</u>.
- 5 <u>AS SOON AS THE ORDER SPREAD</u>, the sons of Israel **provided in abundance** the **first fruits** of grain, new wine, oil, honey and of all the produce of the field; and they **brought in abundantly the tithe of all.**
- 10 Azariah the chief priest of the house of Zadok said to him, "Since the contributions began to be brought into the house of the Lord, <u>we have had enough to eat with plenty left over</u>, for the Lord has blessed His people, and <u>this great quantity is left over</u>."

Devote = chazaq = to fasten upon; hence to seize, be strong, to be courageous.¹⁵²

The devotion of the Levites to their work is described as them **'fastening'** themselves wholeheartedly to their task – they **'seized'** their function – they became **'strengthened'** and had great **'courage'** in the execution of their mandate. Such must be the case with those have devoted themselves completely to providing spiritual nourishment to the people of God.

The **Message Bible** renders verse 4 this way:

"In addition, he asked the people who lived in Jerusalem <u>to be responsible</u> for providing for the priests and Levites so they, <u>without distraction or concern</u>, could <u>give themselves totally</u> to The Revelation of GOD."

Nehemiah reprimanded Israel for neglecting to bring the tithes to the levites. He equated this <u>'neglect'</u> to that of <u>forsaking</u> the 'house of God' (See Nehemiah 13:10-12). The house of God in which the purposes of God are vested, is indeed forsaken, when tithing is neglected.

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PRINCIPLE 12 : A TITHE OF THE TITHE WAS GIVEN TO THE HIGH PRIEST (APOSTOLIC OVERSIGHT)

<u>Note verse 26b</u>: "... the Levites and say to them, 'When you take from the sons of Israel the tithe which I have given you ..., then you shall present an offering from it to the Lord, a <u>tithe of the tithe</u>.

Levites offered a tithe of the tithe collected from Israel – this was their 'heave' offering. So the functioning High Priest in Israel received First Fruits as well as a Tithe of the Tithe collected by the Levites. This is how he was salaried.

Two Possible <u>Suggested</u> Applications {These are <u>not Prescriptive</u>}:

a. Where a church, including its leader, i.e. the person placed/set over the congregation of the church, draws its primary spiritual resource from an apostolic fathering grace or source outside of that church, then the tithe of tithe should go to this individual. Thus the local church with its leader should give a tithe of the collected tithe to the one that they regard as an apostolic father granting spiritual nourishment and oversight to them. The apostolic fathering grace in this context represents the apostolic source from which the leader of the church and therefore its members derive their source of spiritual nourishment and counsel. This individual represents the primary spiritual 'covering' and oversight, who consistently feeds them with relevant truth currently proceeding from the heart of God.

Also, in this case, the leader responsible for the spiritual welfare of a church should, from whatever financial income he/she receives personally, irrespective of the source, also give first fruits and tithes to the apostolic father/source that provides spiritual oversight and covering for him/her. This application is not meant to be prescriptive, but is highly recommended, as it bears the most proximate contemporary application of the principle of 'the tithe of the tithe'.

b. How does the principle of the tithe of the tithe find expression in a context where a specific household of faith is headed by an authentic apostolic father who has a patriarchal role, in that he essentially functions as the primary conduit of spiritual resource and covering for his household as well as that of other spiritual fathers, who themselves are leaders of their own households, or group of households? Further, in this case, this apostolic father does not draw his spiritual nourishment from a single individual who functions as his spiritual father, but is seen as the initial source of a representative fathering function, from which many multiple leaders under his oversight and care benefit. Some hold the view that within this scenario, the tithe of tithe be used to financially honour visiting ministers for the grace impartation received by that household of faith.

Ministering elders that are local to a specific household that labour in doctrine are worthy of double honour (1 Tim. 5:17-19) and as far as possible be honoured financially from the tithe, not the tithe of tithe. Any person who in some way adds significant value to the house should also be honoured financially from portion of the tithe (Neh. 13:10).

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	<u>Deut. 12:5-19</u>
5	"But you shall seek <i>the LORD</i> at the place which the LORD your God will choose from all your tribes, to establish His name there for His dwelling, and there you shall come.
<i>c</i>	
6	"There you shall bring your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the contribution of your hand, your votive offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herd and of your flock.
7	There also you and your households shall eat before the LORD your God, and rejoice in all your
,	undertakings in which the LORD your God has blessed you.
8	"You shall not do at all what we are doing here today, every man <i>doing</i> whatever is right in his own eyes;
9	for you have not as yet come to the resting place and the inheritance which the LORD your God is giving you.
10	"When you cross the Jordan and live in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to inherit, and He gives you rest from all your enemies around <i>you</i> so that you live in security,
11	then it shall come about that the place in which the LORD your God will choose for His name to dwell, there you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and
	the contribution of your hand, and all your choice votive offerings which you will vow to the LORD.
12	"And you shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you and your sons and daughters, your male and
	female servants, and the Levite who is within your gates, since he has no portion or inheritance with
	you.
13	"Be careful that you do not offer your burnt offerings in every <i>cultic</i> place you see,
14	but in the place which the LORD chooses in one of your tribes, there you shall offer your burnt
	offerings, and there you shall do all that I command you.
15	"However, you may slaughter and eat meat within any of your gates, whatever you desire, according to
	the blessing of the LORD your God which He has given you; the unclean and the clean may eat of it, as of the gazelle and the deer.
16	"Only you shall not eat the blood; you are to pour it out on the ground like water.
-	
17	"You are not allowed to eat within your gates the tithe of your grain or new wine or oil, or the firstborn of your herd or flock, or any of your votive offerings which you vow, or your freewill offerings, or the contribution of your hand.
18	"But you shall eat them before the LORD your God in the place which the LORD your God will ch oose, you and your son and daughter, and your male and female servants, and the Levite who is within your
	gates; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God in all your undertakings.
19	"Be careful that you do not forsake the Levite as long as you live in your land.

See also: Deut. 14:22-26

PRINCIPLE 13 : A SECOND TITHE FOR SPECIAL SPIRITUAL PURPOSES

Note Deut. 12: 6-7:There you shall bring your ... your tithes, ... There also you and your householdsshall eat before the LORD your God.

A second tithe was taken and this was designed for use by the individual himself and his household, specifically to cover expenses at the annual feasts. It was not to be eaten in their homes but at the place that God would determine (later at Jerusalem; see Deut.12:5,17). This tithe, although consumed by the giver of the tithe, was for special spiritual purposes associated with the annual feasts. They were not to appear before the Lord empty handed. They were able to rejoice and worship God with these tithes. Note

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Today, individuals should keep aside a 'tithe' as a form of savings to finance costs associated with attending special meetings and conferences, where by virtue of their attendance they would be spiritually encouraged and developed. At these special meetings, a portion of these savings should be set aside to honour those who minister to them.

	<u>Deut. 14:22-26</u>
22	"You shall surely tithe all the produce from what you sow, which comes out of the field
	every year.
23	"You shall eat in the presence of the LORD your God, at the place where He chooses to
	establish His name, the tithe of your grain, your new wine, your oil, and the firstborn of
	your herd and your flock, so that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always.
24	"If the distance is so great for you that you are not able to bring the tithe, since the
	place where the LORD your God chooses to set His name is too far away from you when
	the LORD your God blesses you,
25	then you shall exchange it for money, and bind the money in your hand and go to the
	place which the LORD your God chooses.
26	"You may spend the money for whatever your heart desires: for oxen, or sheep, or
	wine, or strong drink, or whatever your heart desires; and there you shall eat in the
	presence of the LORD your God and rejoice, you and your household.

PRINCIPLE 14: THE TITHE MAINTAINS A FEAR FOR THE LORD

Note that Deut. 14:23 sets forth the tithe to maintain a **fear for the Lord**. Our fear or reverence for God is to be expressed in deep respect and esteem for Him and His ways. The tithe is holy – it belongs to the Lord. This specific tithe mentioned here is the same as the one referred in to Deut. 12, quoted previously. It is wisdom to save a tenth of your income (apart from your normal tithe) and set it aside for payments associated with attendance at special meetings, conferences, schools of ministry, etc. because each time you attend, you are upgraded in understanding the Word, the purposes and plans of God, so that you may function in His Kingdom with greater clarity and effectiveness. These times are essential, in maintaining the 'fear of the Lord'. So then, in addition to their regular systematic tithing off their harvest and increase, which was given to the Levites, God expected the nation of Israel to tithe unto Him – by also spending the money on themselves – not gratuitously or self-indulgently, but this spending was directly associated with their journeys to and celebration of the three broadly categorized feasts in Israel, viz. Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles.

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	Deut 14: 28-29
28	"At the end of every third year you shall bring out all the tithe of your produce in that
	year, and shall <u>deposit it in your town</u> .
29	"The Levite, because he has no portion or inheritance among you, and the alien, the
	orphan and the widow who are in your town, shall come and eat and be satisfied, in
	order that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do.
	<u>Deut. 26:12-14</u>
12	"When you have finished paying all the tithe of your increase in the third year, the year
	of tithing, then you shall give it to the Levite, to the stranger, to the orphan and to the
	widow, that they may eat in your towns and be satisfied.
13	"You shall say before the LORD your God, 'I have removed the sacred portion from my
	house, and also have given it to the Levite and the alien, the orphan and the widow,
	according to all Your commandments which You have commanded me; I have not
	transgressed or forgotten any of Your commandments.
14	'I have not eaten of it while mourning, nor have I removed any of it while I was unclean,
	nor offered any of it to the dead. I have listened to the voice of the LORD my God; I have
	done according to all that You have commanded me.

PRINCIPLE 15 : EVERY THIRD YEAR, THE TITHE WAS ALSO USED TO FEED THE DESTITUTE

Deuteronomy 12:5-14 and 14:22-26 indicates that the tithes were to be brought to a central place, later established at Jerusalem. But every third year, the tithe was not to be brought to this centralised place, but the people were to collect it each in their respective local towns. This tithe was to support the Levites, the poor, the foreigners, the widows and the orphans. Note that the Levites were still taken care of, but there was now also a practical concern expressed for the economically disadvantaged. Herein is an implied principle: From time to time, as discerned and determined by the senior leadership, a local church may use some of its tithes to minister to the physical needs of the destitute and poor, or those in dire need.

This was a powerful way of caring for the needy. God in this season is emphasising the **need for finances to be used for wise distribution**. This third year tithe and its modern day application as suggested above is just one of the ways through which we can minister **to the needy amongst us**. In the early church in the book of Acts, (Acts 2:40-47), they had all things in common and basic needs were met. In Acts 11:29 a collection was made for the brethren living in Judea who suffered severe need because of a famine. Faithful widows should be taken care of financially by the church (1 Tim. 5:19,20). Romans 15:26 indicates that specific churches in certain geographical regions made contributions for the poor in other churches outside of their geographical sphere. The Apostle Paul was very 'eager to remember the poor' (Gal. 2:10).

PRINCIPLE 16 : THE TITHE SECURES A BLESSING OF PRODUCTIVITY IN ALL YOU PUT YOUR HANDS TO

We will deal with the details of the blessing attendant with tithing later, but <u>Deut 14:29</u> says that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands which you do.

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4. THE SPIRIT OF REFORMATION AND TITHING

IF ISRAEL WOULD OBEY GOD'S PRINCIPLES TOTALLY they were promised bountiful harvests during the six years of labour in the land; this would be more than sufficient to sustain them during the seventh, eighth and ninth years.

Lev 25:18-22

- 18 'You shall thus observe My statutes and keep My judgments, so as to carry them out, that **you may live securely on the land.**
- 19 'Then the land will yield its produce, so that you can eat your fill and live securely on it.
- 20 'But if you say, "What are we going to eat on the seventh year if we do not sow or gather in our crops?"
- 21 then I will so order My blessing for you in the sixth year that it will bring forth the crop for three years.
- 22 'When you are sowing the eighth year, you can still eat old things from the crop, eating *the old* until the ninth year when its crop comes in.

IN TIMES OF SPIRITUAL DECLINE, when the nation deviated from the ways of God, the people often neglected to give their first fruits, tithes and offerings. It seems that when God's people drifted away from the Lord or grew cold in their walk and went into spiritual decline, that they also did not give their tithes unto the Lord. Therefore we may conclude that

Withholding of the tithe gives possible indication to a much more serious and deeper spiritual problem.

the withholding of the tithe gives a possible indication to a much more serious and deeper spiritual problem. Whenever a spirit of reformation was at work in the nation of Israel, wherein God brought the nation back to true spirituality and accuracy in lifestyle, there was also an emphasis on bringing realignment to the whole issue of administrating the Treasury and the giving of first fruits, tithes and offerings to the Lord. Spiritual reformation is inclusive of financial reformation.

Some Examples:

NEHEMIAH :

	<u>NEHEMIAH 13 : 10-14</u>				
10	I also discovered that the portions of the Levites had not been given them, so that the				
	Levites and the singers who performed the service had gone away, each to his own field.				
11	So I reprimanded the officials and said, "Why is the house of God forsaken?" Then I gathered				
	them together and restored them to their posts.				
12	All Judah then brought the tithe of the grain, wine and oil into the storehouses.				
13	In charge of the storehouses I appointed Shelemiah the priest, Zadok the scribe, and Pedaiah				
	of the Levites, and in addition to them was Hanan the son of Zaccur, the son of Mattaniah; for				
	they were considered reliable, and it was their task to distribute to their kinsmen.				
14	Remember me for this, O my God, and do not blot out my loyal deeds which I have performed				
	for the house of my God and its services.				

PRINCIPLE 17 : LEADERS HAVE A DIVINE SPIRITUAL OBLIGATION AND BIBLICAL RIGHT TO RESTORE KINGDOM FINANCIAL ORDER TO GOD'S HOUSE.

As part of a general reformation process of the spiritual, moral and civil life of the nation of Israel,

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Nehemiah, asserting his leadership position and uncontested spiritual authority, demanded that the nation revert back to the practice of tithing so that the Levites would be well taken care of. Spiritual leaders, apostolic leaders and leaders of local households of faiths have a biblical right and responsibility to call God's people back to the practice of tithing when this practice wanes, but it is usually done within the broad framework of a broader and all-inclusive reformation process.

Note that Nehemiah '**reprimands'** the nation for '**forsaking'** the house of God. Note the meanings of these words in the original Hebrew.

Reprimand= $r\hat{u}b$ =to strive, contend¹⁵³; to wrangle, that is, hold a controversy; to defend.¹⁵⁴Forsaken= $\hat{a}zab$ =to loosen, that is, relinquish¹⁵⁵; to desert, to fail, to depart from.¹⁵⁶

The house of God is forsaken when His people fail to tithe. Failure to tithe is indicative of a lack of esteem, honour and proper regard for God, as well as for those who function in the house. The Apostle Paul was bold to address financial disobedience as well and taught that ministers of God's Word be adequately financially sustained (2 Cor.8 and 9; 1 Cor. 9:7-11; Gal. 6:6; 1 Thess. 5:12,13; Rom. 15:26-28; Phil. 4:15-18; 1 Tim.5:17-18).

It is noteworthy that, of all of the great things Nehemiah had done, he asks God to remember him for restoring accurate kingdom financial order to Israel. "*Remember me FOR THIS O my God ..."* (*Neh.* 12:8).

Hezekiah also<u>COMMANDED</u> – <u>not suggested or pleaded</u> – that God's people observe tithing and first fruits. See the scripture below.

	<u>2 Chronicles 31:3-12</u>			
3	He also appointed the king's portion of his goods for the burnt offerings, namely, for the morning ar			
	evening burnt offerings, and the burnt offerings for the sabbaths and for the new moons and for the			
	fixed festivals, as it is written in the law of the Lord.			
4	Also HE COMMANDED THE PEOPLE who lived in Jerusalem to give the portion due to the priests and			
	the Levites, that they might DEVOTE themselves to the law of the Lord.			
5	AS SOON AS THE ORDER SPREAD, the sons of Israel provided in abundance the first fruits of grain, ne			
	wine, oil, honey and of all the produce of the field; and they <u>brought in abundantly the tithe of all.</u>			
6	The sons of Israel and Judah who lived in the cities of Judah also brought in the tithe of oxen and shee			
	and the tithe of sacred gifts which were consecrated to the Lord their God , and placed them in heaps.			
7	In the third month they began to make the <u>heaps,</u> and finished them by the <u>seventh month</u>.			
8	When Hezekiah and the rulers came and saw the heaps, they blessed the Lord and His people Israel.			
9	Then Hezekiah questioned the priests and the Levites concerning the heaps.			
10	Azariah the chief priest of the house of Zadok said to him, "Since the contributions began to be broug			
	into the house of the Lord, we have had enough to eat with plenty left over, for the Lord has bless			
	His people, and this great quantity is left over."			
11	Then Hezekiah commanded them to prepare rooms in the house of the Lord, and they prepared them.			
12	They faithfully brought in the contributions and the tithes and the consecrated things; and Conaniah t			
	Levite was the officer in charge of them and his brother Shimei was second.			

HEZEKIAH :

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PRINCIPLE 18 : WIDESPREAD CORPORATE OBEDIENCE OF TITHING AND FIRST FRUIT HAS THE POTENTIAL TO RESULT IN A SIGNIFICANT LEVEL OF SUPER-ABUNDANT PROVISION FOR GOD'S SERVANTS AND TO FINANCE GOD'S PURPOSES.

Significant abundant provision followed this command from Hezekiah. The tithe was brought in the third month (Feast of Pentecost) and either, the giving continued for four months or it took four months to count – see verse 7 above. By the seventh month (Feasts of Tabernacles) the counting stopped. The ministering priesthood were more than abundantly resourced and a 'great quantity' was left over – which was stored. Three months were taken to count the offering. The number three is significant. Three denotes that which is **solid, real, substantial, complete and entire**.¹⁵⁷ Christ was raised on the 'third' day. 'Three' draws reference to that which has **a complete, divine or heavenly dimension** built into it. This level of corporate financial obedience was reflective and depictive of something within the very nature of God. It had a divine element to it.

These tithes were given in the third month in which the Feast of Pentecost was celebrated. The giving persisted for four months, or the counting took four months and stopped in the seventh month in which the Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated. Amongst many things, the Feast of Tabernacles points to the fulfilment and maturation of God's purposes for the earth. Prophetically, this symbolises the certainty that the level of giving will, of the church which is in migration from Pentecost to Tabernacles, be sufficiently abundant to honour God's servants and finance all of God's purposes in the earth. Let it happen, I say!

MALACHI :

Malachi 3:7-12					
7	"From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from My statutes and have				
	not kept them. <u>Return to Me</u> , and <u>I will return to you</u> ," says the Lord of hosts. "But you say, ' <u>How shall we return?'</u>				
8	"Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me ! But you say, 'How have we robbed				
	You?'				
	In tithes and offerings.				
9	"You are <u>cursed with a curse</u> , for you are <u>robbing Me,</u> the <u>whole nation of you!</u>				
10	"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house,				
	and test 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 a blessing until it overflows.				
11	"Then I will rebuke the devourer for y ou, so that i <u>t will not destroy the fruits of the</u>				
	ground; nor will your vine in the field cast its grapes," says the Lord of hosts.				
12	"All the nations will call you blessed, for you shall be a delightful land," says the				
	Lord of hosts.				

PRINCIPLE 19 :LEADERS MUST TITHE THEREBY SETTING AN EXAMPLE FOR THOSE THEY LEAD.THE QUALITY OF THE FINANCIAL OFFERINGS OF LEADERS WILL INFLUENCE THE
QUALITY OF OFFERINGS GIVEN BY THOSE THEY LEAD.

The passage from Malachi above must be viewed and understood within the broader context of the entire message of Malachi. The name **'Malachi' means 'My Messenger'.**¹⁵⁸ This book was written about 100 years after the return of the exiles from Babylon in the time of Nehemiah (approx. 450 - 425 BC). At the time of

More Excellent Giving; Copyright © 2012 Randolph Barnwell. Reproduction in any form is permissible, provided that no monetary profit is gained. [Email: randolph@eternalsound.co.za; rbarnwell@mweb.co.za; Website: www.randolphbarnwell.com; Telephone: (+27) 83 2729 579] Malachi's writing, the temple was completed and sacrifices in the temple were being offered. But the priests were extremely careless in their duty and function. The people were intermarrying with heathen nations. There was widespread discouragement as the nation was gripped and plagued by drought. The ministering priesthood offered deficient offerings to the Lord on the 'table of the Lord' (Mal.1:7-8, 12-13). They offered sub-standard offerings, hence unacceptable offerings, viz. blind, lame, sick, and stolen animals. God rebukes them, asserting that they lack honour for Him and His name (Mal. 1:6; 2:2). Spiritual Leadership is first reprimanded in the book of Malachi before the people are. Leaders must model accurate and acceptable financial giving to the Lord, before they can expect their people to do this. **You cannot teach others to give, if you yourself do not give**. David modelled this – study 1 Chron. 29.

1 Chron. 29: 1-9

- 1 Then King David said to the entire assembly, "My son Solomon, whom alone God has chosen, is still young and inexperienced and the work is great; for **the temple is not for man, but for the Lord God.**
- 2 **"Now with all my ability I have provided for the house of my God** the gold for the things of gold, and the silver for the things of silver, and the bronze for the things of bronze, the iron for the things of iron, and wood for the things of wood, onyx stones and inlaid stones, stones of antimony and stones of various colors, and all kinds of precious stones and alabaster in abundance.
- 3 "Moreover, **in my delight in the house of my God**, the treasure I have of gold and silver, I give to the house of my God, over and above all that I have already provided for the holy temple,
- 4 namely, 3,000 talents of gold, of the gold of Ophir, and 7,000 talents of refined silver, to overlay the walls of the buildings;
- 5 of gold for the things of gold and of silver for the things of silver, that is, for all the work done by the craftsmen. Who then is willing to consecrate himself this day to the Lord?"
- 6 **THEN the rulers of the fathers' households**, and the **princes of the tribes of Israel**, and the **commanders** of thousands and of hundreds, with the overseers over the king's work, **offered willingly**;
- 7 and for the service for the house of God they gave 5,000 talents and 10,000 darics of gold, and 10,000 talents of silver, and 18,000 talents of brass, and 100,000 talents of iron.
- 8 Whoever possessed precious stones gave them to the treasury of the house of the Lord, in care of Jehiel the Gershonite.
- 9 Then the people rejoiced because they had offered so willingly, for they made their offering to the Lord with a whole heart, and King David also rejoiced greatly.

David, from his personal treasury, gives lavishly for the building of Solomon's temple. Note verse 6: "<u>THEN</u>, the ruler's of the father's household offered willingly". David's example of giving ignited and spurred the other leaders to give – and then the people gave.

After highlighting many of their errant ways, Malachi in chapter 3 proceeds to address their neglect of giving God tithes and offerings. In his classic writing style of first making a statement, then posing a question arising out of that statement, he highlights to the nation the severity of neglecting the tithe and offerings from God's perspective.

Verse 7 indicates that the nation must RETURN to the Lord. In answer to their question as to how to return or repent, Malachi asks a serious question, viz. 'Will a man rob or defraud God?'

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PRINCIPLE 20 : A NON-TITHER IS A ROBBER OF GOD

The non-tithing person is a thief, who deliberately chooses to rob his God and impoverish his spiritual leaders, and as a result, brings upon himself a self-inflicted curse which gives the 'devourer' legal grounds to eat or consume his blessing or potential abundance. The context of Malachi 3:7-12 is one in which the people have drifted away from the ordinances of God - the context is one of a backslidden people far from God. God calls upon His people to 'return'. Amongst the many areas in which they were to return to the Lord was in the area of the 'return' of the tithe unto the Lord.

But notice how God addresses this problem. He accuses His people of being thieves. As far as God is concerned, if you do not return your tithes,

then you are a thief, a robber, because you are holding back something that does not belong to you. A thief is somebody who takes possession of something that does not belong to him, without permission. The Bible clearly teaches that the tithe belongs to the Lord and it is 'holy unto the Lord' (Leviticus 27:30-32). Not to give tithes is to deliberately keep back that which belongs to the Lord. Many Christians today would not even think of robbing or stealing something from their fellow man, but many think nothing of robbing their Creator, God Almighty, by not giving tithes. This is also a reminder to us that God keeps a record of our tithing.

Note also that although tithes are given to those who labour in the house of the Lord – i.e. given to men, God says that the withholding of tithes and offerings has robbed HIM. This highlights the important principle of seeing God's servants as representations of the Lord HIMSELF.

PRINCIPLE 21 : NON-TITHERS INCUR A SELF-INFLICTED CURSE

The result of robbing God through not giving tithes and offerings is given in verse 9: 'Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation'.

Cursed = arar = to inflict with a curse; to bind (with a spell); to hem in with <u>obstacles</u>; to render <u>powerless to resist;</u>¹⁵⁹

[Note: The Hebrew word translated 'curse' in Mal.3:9 is me'erah and has the same general meaning as 'arar' indicated above]¹⁶⁰

Non-givers are cursed. They are always beset by various obstacles to their well-being and prosperity, and in that condition they will be powerless to resist that which erodes their contentment and material well-being. This is essentially what the word 'cursed' implies here.

Scripture teaches that a curse without a cause will not settle or alight.

<u>Proverbs 26:2</u> Like a sparrow in its flitting (wandering), like a swallow in its flying, So a <u>curse without cause</u> does not alight.

He who does not tithe gives legitimate grounds for a curse to have a cause or reason to settle within his life. This curse is further explained in verse 11:

Malachi 3:11 "Then I will <u>rebuke the devourer for v</u>ou, so that i<u>t will not destroy the fruits of the ground</u>; nor will your vine in the field cast its grapes," says the Lord of hosts.

The 'devourer' here is representative of satan himself. The Hebrew word, translated 'devour' is 'akal', which means to 'to eat or consume'.¹⁶¹ Refusal to give tithes and offerings will result in a self-inflicted curse upon your finances. You actually open the door and give satan legal grounds to devour and erode into your finances and material substance. You will always struggle

financially and never enter into the full measure of the prosperity that God intends for you to have. In fact, your money and wealth will slip through your fingers and you will never be satisfied even though you may be materially well off.

Haggai 1:6"You have sown much, but harvest little; you eat, but there is not enough to be satisfied; you drink, but there is not enough to become drunk; you put on clothing, but no one is warmenough; and he who earns, earns wages to put into a purse with holes."

Tithes and offerings bring tremendous blessing upon the giver and actually serves as protection against the curse attendant with the disobedience of not tithing. These blessings are highlighted later.

Malachi 1:14"But cursed be the swindler who has a male in his flock and vows it, but sacrifices a blemishedanimal to the Lord, for I am a great King," says the Lord of hosts, "and My name is feared among the
nations."

Here in this verse, the priests themselves are chided in that they bring defiled offerings, not representative of the quality of offering expected by the Lord. God rejects this. This equates to someone presenting a tithe or offering to the Lord and passes this off in the eyes of others as a true 'tithe', whereas it is not completely accurately representative of the tithe due. God describes this person as a 'swindler', i.e. a deceiver, a cheat.

An Aside – for your consideration:

In the book of Malachi, the word 'curse' appears four times, viz.

- in Mal.2:2, in reference to disobedience;
- in Mal. 1:14, in reference to <u>defiled offerings</u> postured as a true and accurate offering, when it is not;
- in Mal. 3:11 in reference to not tithing;
- in Mal.4:6 in reference to the absence of spiritual fathering and sonship.

In Mal. 4:6, a different Hebrew word for cursed is used, viz. 'herem' = a ban of destruction; to be reduced to a place of obscurity or insignificance to the point that there is even no memory of you – no positive legacy remains.¹⁶²

PRINCIPLE 22 : 'TOKEN' OR 'PART' TITHING CONSTITUTES DISOBEDIENCE

Notice that the blessings come to those who bring 'ALL THE TITHES' or the '**WHOLE TITHE'**. As already indicated, 'tithe' means ten percent (10%) or one tenth (1/10). Many Christians do not give the 'whole tithe', i.e. one tenth of all their gross income, but pay a token of their tithe. In this case, God does not view it as a tithe, because it is not one tenth of all your income - it is not in keeping with the definition of '**tithe'. Partial obedience constitutes total disobedience.**

SHOULD ONE PAY tithes FROM YOUR GROSS SALARY OR NET SALARY?

Gross salary is your total remuneration before any tax or other deductions. Net salary is the amount of money you have left after tax and other deductions. Tithes should be paid from off your gross salary. Your gross salary or gross profit represents your worth in the work place; it represents the monetary value of your talents, abilities and effort in the workplace for a period of time. Jacob gave tithes of 'ALL HE HAD' (Genesis 28: 20 - 22). God expected Israel to give a tithe of ALL their increase - Proverbs 3. We also should give a tithe of all our income/profit. Many Christians are faithful to the government in the payment of their tax calculated as a certain percentage from their gross salary/profit, but do not calculate the 10% tithe off their gross salary. In response to the question as to whether they should pay taxes to the Roman government, Jesus answers the Pharisees as follows : ...

Matthew 22:21 'Render therefore unto Ceasar the things which are Ceasar's; and unto God the things which are God's.'

We must render to God the things which belong to God and the book of Leviticus clearly teaches that the tithe belongs to the Lord.

<u>Leviticus 27:30</u> 'Thus <u>all the tithe of the land</u>, of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, <u>IS THE</u> LORD'S it is <u>holy to the Lord</u>.

The tithe is God's portion (Leviticus.27:30) - it belongs to the Lord just as our tax payment is required by the government. Christians who are in business should pay tithes calculated at 10% of the their profit before tax .

PRINCIPLE 23 : 10% OF GROSS EARNINGS AS THE SUM TOTAL OF YOUR GIVING STILL CONSTITUTES DISOBEDIENCE IF YOU DO NOT ALSO GIVE OFFERINGS

Malachi clearly indicates that a curse comes upon robbers of God who rob God in tithes AND OFFERINGS. It takes both of these to "open the windows of heaven". Assuming the gross income of someone is R 5 000, and that person's tithes R 500, without giving any money as an offering. This person is still 'missing the mark' as far as God's expectation for giving is concerned. 'Offerings', over and above the tithe, must also be given to the 'storehouse' of God.

PRINCIPLE 24 YOUR STOREHOUSE IS THE PERSON FROM WHOSE GOD-GIVEN GRACE YOU DRAW SPIRITUAL NOURISHMENT AND COVERING

Malachi 3:10 says very plainly, 'bring the tithe into my storehouse, that there may be meat in my house.' What is meant by storehouse?

'Storehouse' in the natural implies two things :

- i) it is the place from which we get food to eat, and
- ii) it is the place we obtain seed to sow for future harvests.

"The storehouse in the Old Testament was not the edifice, called the Temple, but the priests and the Levites ministering in the Temple. Therefore the Priests & Levites received the tithe on behalf of the Lord. They were the people who provided the spiritual resource to the nation!"¹⁶³ (Thamo Naidoo).

The 'storehouse' is not the 'house'. It is the 'store' that nourishes the 'house'. Who is your 'store'?

As sons of God, we receive our spiritual food from our spiritual fathers who for the most part, operate from a local church, of which we are a part. Thus, the storehouse would be the set-man/spiritual father who is the provider of spiritual nourishment in your life. Do not see the 'storehouse' as the physical church building nor the church as an organization or institution. Rehearse principles no. 2, 5 and 11 in this section. Framed differently, in spiritual terms, one could say that the 'house' is not the same as the 'storehouse'. The 'house' is the household of faith, headed by a representative spiritual father who fathers the souls of a group of spiritual sons. The 'store' in this 'house' would be the spiritual father/leader who is endowed by God with a specific, unique grace deposit to provide fathering and spiritual nourishment and care to the spiritual sons.

PRINCIPLE 25 : TITHES & OFFERINGS FACILITATE SPIRITUAL MATURITY AND THE COMPLETION OF DIVINE ASSIGNMENTS

Notice also that the scriptures exhort to bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, '**that there may be meat in my house'**. Meat speaks of nourishment, strength and maturity (see Hebrews 5:14). Meat also indicates the capacity to assimilate, understand and practically obey weighty revelation and doctrine. A non-tithing church is an immature, undernourished church. There seems to be a direct connection between the faithfulness of the people in tithing and the level of spiritual maturity that results from engagement with profound revelation. The handling of 'money' and spiritual 'revelation' are connected.

John 4:34 (NKJV) also suggests that 'meat' is symbolic of one's intense desire and certain ability to engage and bring to successful completion, specific aspects of the will of God attendant with your life.

John 4:34 Jesus saith unto them, <u>My meat</u> is to <u>do the will</u> of him that sent me, and to <u>finish his work</u>. (KJV)

A faithful tithing community of sons of God in a household of faith under the direction of a spiritual father, will have sufficient financial resources to facilitate the progression and attainment of specific dimensions of God's will, given to them to steward.

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PRINCIPLE 26 : TITHES AND OFFERINGS PRODUCE A DIVINE RESPONSE OF BLESSING ON THE TITHER

Verses 10 to 12 of Malachi chapter 3 describes the blessing of God on those who give the 'whole' tithe. God is a giver by nature and there is something about financial giving that arouses and activates God to bless the 'giver', since this quality of giving is something that is inherently core to who He is.

PRINCIPLE 27 : TITHES AND OFFERINGS PRECIPITATE POURED OUT BLESSINGS FROM HEAVEN'S MANY WINDOWS (v. 10)

 Mal. 3:10b
 "... If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows."

God pours out blessing upon faithful givers. The Hebrew word used **for 'pour' is the word 'ruq' = 'to empty out'**.¹⁶⁴ In other words, God empties blessings upon you - you are not just given the blessing, but the blessing is emptied upon you. This speaks of an overflowing abundance.

Notice also the use of the plural **'windows'**. God blesses not just through one window, but through many windows. The Hebrew word for windows (arubbah) means **'floodgates'**.¹⁶⁵ The same word is used in Genesis 7:11 and 8:2 to describe how God opened the heavens to release rain upon the earth in judgement. But here in Malachi 3, the floodgates of the heavens are opened to release blessings on the giver of tithes and offerings. The effect of this blessing upon those who receive it is described as follows in various versions of the Bible:

\triangleright	"until it overflows"	(NASV)
\triangleright	"there shall not be room enough to receive it"	(KJV)
\triangleright	"flood you with blessing after blessing"	(CEV)
\triangleright	"You will have more than enough of everything"	(ERV)
\triangleright	"pour out blessings beyond your wildest dreams"	(Message Bible)
\triangleright	"a blessing till there is no space"	(YLT)
	"pour down for you an overflowing blessing"	(Amplified Bible)

In other words, God's poured out blessing through His many windows of Heaven will be in such great abundance that the recipient will not even be able to have the capacity to contain it. It will be much more than you need. The results of abundant blessing upon the faithful giver are further described in Proverbs 3:8-9.

Proverbs 3:9,10:Honor the Lord from your wealth and from the first of all your produce;So your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will overflow with new wine.

The Hebrew word for 'Honour' = Kabed = to make heavy or weighty.¹⁶⁶

Proverbs 3:9 explains how we can bring honour to the Lord -- by giving him the first fruit of our substance. The Hebrew word for '**substance'** is **the word 'hon' which means 'wealth or sufficiency'**.¹⁶⁷ The way in which you honour God with your wealth is by giving him the 'first fruits'.

Proverbs 3 :9,10 describes a two-fold blessing on the Giver

- a) 'Your Barns will be Filled with Plenty'
- b) Your Vats or (Presses) will Overflow with New Wine

These blessings are discussed under the Blessing of First Fruit giving in chapter 5

PRINCIPLE 28 : GOD REBUKES THE DEVOURER FOR THE TITHER'S SAKE (verse 11)

As indicated already, the devourer here is representative of satan and all his evil schemes against the children of God. Two specific works of the enemy against your life will be rebuked, and these rebukes by the Lord against the works of the enemy are intended directly to ensure the **two-fold blessing attendant** with first fruits promised in Proverbs 3:9,10. Thus it could be said the tithe ensures and sustains the blessings of the first fruit.



Destroy = shachath = to decay, to ruin, to pervert, to corrupt, to become corrupt, to wipe out

This speaks of your ability to be fruitful, to be productive, to partake of and enjoy the fruits of the harvest - enjoying the rewards of your labour, enjoying a life of abundance, fullness and prosperity. Concerning tithing, Deuteronomy 14:29 says that, "the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest" (KJV).



A vine is a plant on which grapes grow. Fruit 'cast before the time' refers to grapes which are given off the vine before the time of harvest. They would fall to the ground and not be used. This indicates that the person, the owner of the vineyard does not **enjoy the fruit of his labour**. All the time and energy spent in tending the vine for a harvest of ripe juicy grapes is all in vain and wasted. Now the blessing of God here is that your vine will cast her fruit at the right time and season in which it could be put to further productive use. You will see the expected positive result or outcome attendant with every seed sown.

This describes the 'blessed man' of Psalm 1 who 'brings forth fruit in <u>his</u> season; his leaf also does not wither, and whatever he does prospers'. Leaves that usually 'wither in the dry autumn season are indicative of the general national economic depression or recession. But even in these economically difficult periods, the tithers' leaf does not wither. This speaks of **continued and ongoing usefulness**. He who tithes will see how God is able to bring growth to his finances. He who does not tithe will see how his money will slip through his hands - he will not enjoy the fruit of his labour and will forever be in financial bondage.

PRINCIPLE 29 : THOSE WHO GIVE TITHES & OFFERINGS ACCESS AND ACTIVATE SPECIFIC REVELATIONS OF GOD'S NATURE

Notice at the end of verse 11 and 12 of Malachi chapter 3, that God, who has promised all these blessings upon those who tithe, describes Himself as the **'Lord of Hosts'**. God is a man of war. He is a Mighty Warrior determined to destroy all his demonic enemies (Exodus 15:3-4; Isaiah 42:13; Revelation 19:11).

'Hosts' = Tsaba = a mass of persons (or figurative things), especially regularly organized for war (an army)¹⁶⁸

Thamo Naidoo provides the following insight of the meaning of 'Hosts':¹⁶⁹

The Word 'Hosts' implies that ...

- 1. Everything created to function with military precision; highlights God as a man of war
- 2. The idea of servanthood everything was created with order and ranking to serve a specific purpose.

So when the Bible refers to the **Lord of Hosts**, it is referring to the Lord as the '**Lord of armies**' or the '**Lord of people and things organised for war'**. It primarily refers to angelic armies positioned for battle, and also the deliberate positioning of things, systems, policies, etc. to serve and facilitate Divine purposes in us. In other words, as you are faithful in your tithes and offerings to the Lord, God rises up as a Man of war, and orchestrates all things in heaven and earth in order to bring blessing your way. God can cause all things to serve His purposes vested within you. He will change earthly, secular policies if He has to and influence events and circumstances for your benefit as you do His will. Our giving activates this dimension of the nature of God to act on our behalf.

Apart from this, our giving generally postures us to experience specific aspects of the nature of God. An example of this is Abraham – Read Genesis 22. When he was willing to offer his only son, Isaac, the Lord intervened and stopped him from going through with it and drew his attention to a lamb caught in the bushes. At this sight, Abraham's mind and understanding was immediately opened to God's nature and capacity to provide. Abraham named that place "The Lord will Provide" (Jehovah Jireh).¹⁷⁰

Financial Giving accesses specific aspects of God's nature that is key in accelerating His will in and through us. The giver gets revelation of His person as well as greater facilitation of His purpose.

The term 'Provide' is made of two parts 'Pro' = before; and 'Vide'= 'to see'. Hence 'provide' means 'to see before'. Thus Abraham understood clearly that God had already seen his need for a sacrifice way before he even had actual need of the sacrifice.

The Shunamite woman who gave to Elisha was the first person to be informed of an impending economic famine. God's nature as a preserver was evoked upon her subjective and personal experience. Also, she was given wisdom as to what to do to survive the famine. Further to this, she supernaturally received favour from the king after the famine was concluded, her land and property being restored back to her, as well as receiving from the king all the profit she would have received had there not been a famine. All of this blessing was because she ministered financially and practically to Elisha and his servant. (2 Kings 4 and 8:1-6). God protects and preserves 'givers'. He provides adequately for their long term sustainability.

PRINCIPLE 30 : THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE GIVER IS RECOGNISABLE BY OTHERS (v. 12)

There will be recognition by others that God's blessing is upon you because you will be a '**delightful' land**. **Delightful = hepe =** Pleasure, desire; the root idea is '**to incline toward something'**.¹⁷¹ Others will be inclined and well disposed toward you. In other words, you will enjoy favour with men. You will find uncanny acceptance and favour from the most unlikely sources.

5. JESUS ENDORSED THE TITHE

Jesus Himself endorsed the giving of tithes. If ever there was an opportunity in scripture for Jesus to have taught the discontinuance of the giving of the tithe, it would have been in the scriptures quoted below. Far from dismissing it, Jesus actually stresses it and actually teaches that it should not be NEGLECTED.

Matthew 23:23

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For <u>you tithe</u> mint and dill and cummin, and have <u>neglected the weightier provisions</u> of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done <u>without neglecting the others</u>.

Luke 11:42

But woe to you Pharisees! For <u>you pay tithe</u> of mint and rue and every kind of garden herb, and <u>yet disregard</u> justice and the love of God; but these are the things you should have done <u>without neglecting the others</u>.

PRINCIPLE 31 : THERE ARE WEIGHTIER MATTERS THAN TITHING, VIZ. LOVE, JUSTICE, MERCY AND FAITHFULNESS

Jesus identified the following as more important and 'weightier' than tithing, viz. justice, mercy, love and faithfulness.

PRINCIPLE 32 : THE TITHE MUST NOT DEGENERATE INTO A SYSTEM OF PHARISAICAL RELIGIOUS WORKS THAT ARE NOT REFLECTIVE OF A RIGHTEOUS LIFESTYLE

Jesus commends the Pharisees for bringing the whole tithe, but condemns their attitude of giving. The essence of the verses quoted above is that tithing is no substitute for justice, mercy, love and faithfulness. For the Pharisees, tithing was an activity of WORKS, as was their activities of fasting and prayer (Luke 18:9-14). Tithing must never become a system of WORKS that arises from 'law-based' Christianity. It must not become a gimmick or cold mechanical exercise that we engage in without an inner righteousness reflected outwardly in our lives. The tithe becomes an expression of ourselves, gifts and talents in the workplace given to us by God. So when we give our tithes, we are giving ourselves. Thus, the tithe becomes an extension, a token, a reflection of a life that is already fully given and surrendered to the Lord and is totally committed to holiness, righteousness, justice, faithfulness, love, etc. We, i.e. our entire lives and lifestyles, must not be detached from our tithe, but our obedience in the area of tithes must be in congruence with a Christian lifestyle of love, integrity, justice, mercy and faithfulness.

PRINCIPLE 33 : YOUR OBEDIENCE IN TITHING DOES NOT SUBSTITUTE FOR YOUR DISOBEDIENCE IN OTHER AREAS

Tithing, as well as sacrificial giving, is no substitute or cover up for disobedient living. Your obedience in the area of tithing is no substitute for your disobedience in other areas. The Pharisees presumed that because they were faithful and even fanatical in tithing, that God would wink at their disobedience in the areas of practicing justice, showing mercy, been loving and living righteously.

<u>Micah 6:6-8</u>

- 6 With what shall I come to the Lord And bow myself before the God on high? Shall I come to Him <u>with burnt</u> <u>offerings</u>, With yearling calves?
- 7 Does the Lord take delight in thousands of rams, In ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I present my firstborn FOR MY rebellious acts, The fruit of my body FOR THE sin of my soul?
- 8 He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you.
 But to DO JUSTICE, to LOVE KINDNESS, And to WALK HUMBLY with your God?

In part two of this Kingdom Economics Series, viz. 'The Prophetic Import of Financial Giving', I demonstrate for example, how that if one does not prioritise and preserve divinely ordained relationships, that the all the blessings attendant with first fruits, tithes and offerings will be rendered null and void.

PRINCIPLE 34 : THE TITHE IS NOT TO BE NEGLECTED

Jesus taught that the tithe is not to be neglected. 'Neglect' in the original Greek ('aphiemi') implies the forsaking or omission of something.¹⁷² Many people have omitted the tithe – they have 'left it out' or 'excluded' it as the Greek word suggests. Many people may argue, 'I have so many accounts and other financial commitments at the end of every month, I just can't afford to tithe.' Well, in view of the abundant blessings and benefits of tithing discussed above, **you cannot afford not to tithe!** Tithe in simple obedient FAITH. The tithe is not optional and quite frankly, you do not have a choice in the matter. Failure to tithe is a blatant disregard for a very clearly stated principle in scripture. It is possible that the willful neglect and disobedience in the area of tithing is evidence that the person is under the bondage of the god of Mammon. A lack of tithing closes the windows of Heaven's blessings. You have the ability to either open or to keep shut the windows of heaven upon your life.

6. TITHING AND THE ETERNAL PRIESTHOOD

Tithing and the priesthood are inextricably linked. Jesus is our High Priest after the order of Melchisidek (Hebrews 6:19, 20). In Hebrews 7, the Scriptures reveal that tithing played a part in the priesthood of Melchisedek and the priesthood of Jesus.

Hebrews 7:4-10

- 1 For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham as he was returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him,
- 2 to whom also **Abraham apportioned a tenth part of all the spoils**, was first of all, by the translation of his name, **king of righteousness**, and then also **king of Salem**, which is king of peace.
- 3 Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, he remains a priest perpetually.
- 4 Now observe how great this man was to whom **Abraham, the patriarch, gave a tenth of the choicest spoils.**

- 5 And those indeed of the **sons of Levi** who receive the priest's office **have commandment** in the Law to collect a tenth from the people, that is, from their brethren, although these are descended from Abraham.
- 6 But the one whose genealogy is not traced from them <u>collected a tenth</u> from Abraham and blessed the one who <u>had the promises</u>.
- 7 But without any dispute the **lesser is blessed by the greater**.
- 8 In this case mortal men receive tithes, but in that case one receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives on.
- 9 And, so to speak, through Abraham even Levi, who received tithes, paid tithes,
- 10 for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.

PRINCIPLE 35 : TITHING AND PRIESTHOOD ARE INEXTRICABLY LINKED.

The priesthood of Melchisidek is an eternal priesthood, in that it is without beginning or end (Heb.7:3). Jesus now lives forever after this same order of priesthood – an eternal priesthood and, in His priesthood, Jesus receives tithes from His Church. The Levites collected tithes from Israel. The Levites in turn gave a tenth of this collected tithe. This tenth of the tithe was given to the High Priest. The priesthood receives tithes. We believe in the priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2:5,9; Revelation 1:5,6), but in this context, priesthood symbolically represents those whom God has set aside for specific ministry functions because of the unique grace endowment given to them. Melchisedek received tithes, and so did the Levitical priesthood receive tithes.

Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words¹⁷³ make an interesting point of comparison - Hebrews 7 clearly shows the superiority of the Melchisedek priesthood to that of the Levitical priesthood in the following respects:

- > Abraham, the ancestor of the Levites, paid tithes to Melchisidek (Gen. 14:20)
- Melchisidek, whose genealogy is outside that of the Levites, received tithes from Abraham, who received divine promises
- Whereas death is the ultimate lot of those (including Levites) who took tithes, the death of Melchisidek is not recorded in scripture.
 - The Levites who took tithes virtually gave tithes through Abraham to Melchisidek (verses 9 and 10).

Thus we may conclude that if the priesthood of Jesus is eternal after the order of the Melchisidek priesthood, and even the Levites who issued from Abraham's loins paid tithes to Melchisidek, then that priesthood still continues today under the High Priesthood of Jesus Christ – and if so, the current New Testament royal priesthood (previously represented by the Levites, but now by the Melchisidek order) must still offer tithes, walking in the example of Abraham (Romans 4). Thus, when we give our tithes today, we are affirming our relationship as priests to our High Priest, Jesus Christ. The priesthood and tithing are linked. We are believer priests, holy and royal and thus have a priestly function in giving tithes.

In the New Testament, we are still to tithe, since Jesus, our High Priest, is representative of a priest after the Melchisedek order, an order of priest that received tithes. This is clear evidence that tithing under the new covenant is biblical and proper.

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Here is **<u>Hebrews 7:5,6</u>** in the King James version of the Bible:

And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a <u>commandment to take tithes</u> of the people <u>according to the law</u>, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham: But he whose descent is not

counted from them <u>received tithes</u> of Abraham, and blessed him that had <u>the promises.</u>

- Note an interesting distinction in tithing between the Levitical priesthood, who TOOK TITHES BY COMMANDMENT (Heb.7:5) and the Melchisedek priesthood who RECEIVED TITHES (Heb.7:6) from one who has PROMISE.
- The Levites, the Aaronic order, took tithes by commandment indicates a law position, where people responded by tithing based upon an external commandment to them, yet the obedience thereof might not be inwardly motivated by a desire to please God.
- Jesus, after the Melchisidek order, receives tithes indicates a grace position, where with spontaneity and willingness, the royal and holy New Covenant priesthood gives tithes – and like Abraham, they respond not from the context of an external commandment, but from the premise of a prophetically given promise.

PRINCIPLE 36 : THE ONE WHO TITHES TAPS INTO THE INDESTRUCTIBLE DIMENSION OF THE MELCHISEDEK PRIESTHOOD

Melchisidek's priesthood, the priesthood order in which Jesus and we also function, is a priesthood based on the power of an indestructible life.

Hebrews 7:15-16

- 15 And this is clearer still, if another priest arises according to the likeness of Melchizedek,
- 16 who has become such not on the basis of a law of physical requirement, but according to the power of an **indestructible life**.

The word 'indestructible' here is also translated 'endless' alluding to immortality, i.e. a life not subject to the eroding, decaying and ageing processes.¹⁷⁴ The tither through tithing to our High Priest, Christ, after the order of Melchisedek, taps into this dimension. There is no deterioration or dissolution in the nature of this priesthood. Issues that seemingly threaten security and preservation are rendered powerless. Thus when we tithe, we are demonstrating and affirming our position that we are not prone to the 'destructibility' of this life – that those things that cause many others to be perplexed about protection, preservation and provision of needs, do not pose any threat to us.

Our tithe gives acknowledgement to Jesus Christ, our Great and Eternal High Priest, who (just like Melchisedek blessed Abraham before he received his tithes) has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places.

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PRINCIPLE 37 :THE ONE WHO TITHES SETS A FOUNDATION AND PATTERN FOR DIVINE
PROVIDENCE AND PROSPERITY FOR THE NEXT GENERATION, POSITIONING THEM
FOR A LIFE OF BLESSEDNESS

Tithing has a continuous history from Abraham onwards: from Abraham to Jacob, to the nation of Israel, to the priesthood ministry of Jesus, which continues today in the church. Abraham tithed, setting an example for Jacob, the nation of Israel, and even for us, who through Christ are part of Abraham's lineage. Even when he gave tithes to Melchisedek, the Scriptures indicate that Levi was in his loins – and so were we. We have a long and well documented history of tithing. As we continue this awesome and powerful tradition, we too are also setting a pattern of behavior for our own children to emulate. Prophetically we are paving the way for our children - the next generation coming after us to continue this act of obedience. Condition your children's future by modelling accurately before them the practice of giving tithes. They will be placed at a significant advantage. Educate them concerning the truth of tithing. Practically demonstrate to them how you tithe as a parent; show them the amounts involved and more importantly the reverential and joyful disposition with which you do it.

7. PAUL'S VIEW

While Paul never used the term 'tithe' in any of his epistles, he has much to say concerning finance and giving generally, and as will be seen in subsequent chapters, his teaching on finance by far supercedes the expectation of the Old covenant requirements (Read 2 Corinthians 8 and 9). It could be argued that because Paul used the principle of tithing, intended to support Levites in the Old Covenant to present his arguments, that ministers in the New Covenant should also live off the Gospel they preach (1 Cor. 9:1-14), that he supported the principle of tithing.

Something I mentioned in defence of the relevance of the practice financial first fruits in our contemporary time in chapter five merits repetition here:

Paul powerfully refutes the practice of physical circumcision (Gal 5:6). The writer of the book of Hebrews powerfully argues for the discontinuance of animal sacrifices (Heb. 10:4-7). Both these practices, predated the law, were confirmed in the law, and were contemporaries with first fruits and tithing, yet nowhere does Paul or any other New Testament writer out-rightly argue for the setting aside of the practice of first fruits or tithing. A specific case is made for the invalidity of circumcision and animal sacrifice, but not the tithe or first fruits.

THE TITHE STILL APPLIES TODAY

The reader is referred to the last segment in the chapter on First Fruits, where I argue for the relevance of the practice of first fruits in our modern day. Points raised there could very well apply to the tithe as well. In succinct summary, here are the reasons why I believe the tithe is still a valid and relevant practice today:

- ✓ The first and last mention of tithing in Scripture concerns Abraham's practice of the principle. Abraham is set before us as a standard to emulate by various Scriptures.
- ✓ The tithe predated the law. Its genesis had no context of 'law'.
- ✓ The tithe was entrenched within the 'law'.
- ✓ The tithe was endorsed by Jesus, the greatest authority on Scripture.

- ✓ The law (the shadow) finds its total fulfillment in Christ (the substance).
- ✓ The tithe is an integral dimension of my priestly identity and function.
- ✓ New Testament writers do not stress the invalidity or irrelevance of the tithe, but were vocal in their disapproval of other Old Testament practices like circumcision and animal sacrifices, which were contemporaries with tithing.
- ✓ Tithing has a seamless continuity throughout Scripture.

Many anti-tithers argue that under the New Covenant, 'grace' and not 'law' should govern giving and that since tithing was a significant feature of the era of the law, it is not applicable today but rather, financial giving should be spurred and performed in the spirit of 'grace' which essentially is opposite of 'law'.

It is true that 'grace' must ignite and characterise all financial giving, but tithing is relevant for today and must be observed in the culture of 'grace' and not from the perspective of a binding, legal obligation. More often than not, many anti-tithers are against the idea of returning 10% of gross earnings to the Lord, in favour of a lesser amount. It must be noted that if one thoroughly examines Paul's teaching on financial giving in 2 Corinthians chapter 8 and 9, that it becomes clear that the guiding principles he outlines for giving under grace would suggest or imply a value, which exceeds that of the tithe by far. "No mention of 'tithe' exists in the books of Acts because there was no need to, since people were giving 100% and not 10%" – Dr Sagie Govender [see Acts 4 and 5].

CONCLUSION

"TEST me NOW in this," says the LORD of hosts

The only time God issues a challenge to us to see whether or not He will do what He says is in the area of giving tithes.

Mal 3:10"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and TEST 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 a blessing until it overflows.

God dares us to put Him to the test and see whether or not He will honour His promise of abundant blessing upon our lives. It is important to mention at this point that tithing is an act of obedience to a very clearly stated commanded in the scripture and it must be performed BY FAITH. It was 'by faith' that Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain (Heb 11:4). Assuming your gross income per month is R8000. The world will think you are crazy to take one tenth of that, which amounts to R 800 and pay it as your tithe unto the Lord every month for twelve months of the year. This means thast if this individual is faithful in paying the tithe every month, that in one year, the total tithe payment would amount to R9 600 (apart from your first fruits and 'offerings'). The world says rather take that money and invest it in a financial company or some other business venture or take it and pay your credit accounts or other bills. But God says, "NO!, DO NOT ROB ME, BUT PROVE ME, TEST ME AND SEE IF I WILL NOT OPEN THE WINDOWS OF HEAVEN AND BLESS YOU FAR BEYOND YOUR CAPACITY TO CONTAIN IT AND BEYOND WHAT THE FINANCIAL SYSTEMS OF THE WORLD COULD EVER DO !"

Note also the emphasis on the word **NOW'**. This implies that obedience in this area must not be postponed. As was indicated in the First fruits chapter, Hezekiah authoritatively called for first fruits and tithes to be given.

2 Chronicles 31:4-5 HE COMMANDED THE PEOPLE who lived in Jerusalem to give the portion due to the priests and the Levites, that they might devote themselves to the law of the Lord. AS SOON AS THE ORDER SPREAD, the sons of Israel provided in abundance the first fruits of grain, new wine, oil, honey and of all the produce of the field; and they brought in abundantly THE TITHE OF ALL

Note, <u>AS SOON AS THE ORDER</u> WAS GIVEN, there was an immediate and instantaneous response of obedience from the people. Obedience to the tithing principle must not be delayed or postponed.

God actually issues us with a challenge. As we tithe in obedience to the Lord, we must maintain an attitude of fervent, unwavering faith that God would provide His abundant blessing upon our lives. Tithing, along with first fruits and 'offerings' is God's remedy for financial blessing and freedom. You keep your part of the covenant - return your tithes faithfully, and God will keep His part - He will bless you.

Abundant grace to you!

Summation of Tithing Principles

- 1. Tithing and the priesthood are inextricably linked.
- 2. Leaders have a divine obligation biblical right to restore kingdom financial order to God's house.
- 3. Leaders must tithe, thereby setting an example for those they lead.
- 4. The quality of the financial offerings of leaders will influence the quality of offerings given by those they lead.
- 5. The tithe is not to be neglected.
- 6. Tithing is not optional.
- 7. You should tithe on all forms of income.
- 8. Tithing was never to be a legal obligation but a voluntary privilege.
- 9. The tithe belongs to the Lord.
- 10. Your tithe is 'returned to the Lord' it was never yours to begin with. To withhold it is therefore robbery.
- 11. A non-tither is a robber of God.
- 12. Non-tithers are cursed.
- 13. The tithe is holy unto the Lord.
- 14. The tithe maintains the fear of the Lord.
- 15. 'Token' tithing or part-tithing constitutes disobedience.
- 16. Ten percentage of gross earnings as the sum total of your giving constitutes disobedience if you fail to give offerings also.
- 17. We tithe to a person, not to an institution.
- 18. Your storehouse is the person from whose God-given grace you draw spiritual nourishment and covering.
- 19. We tithe to those who represent the face of God in the House of God.

20. Tithes are used to sustain those who work in the house of the Lord, most especially those that provide spiritual nourishment.

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- 21. Widespread corporate obedience in first fruit, tithes and offerings has the potential to result in a significant level of super-abundant provision for God's servants and to finance God's purposes.
- 22. A tithe of the collected corporate tithe is given to a church's apostolic oversight.
- 23. The tithe is a covenant connector and covenant activator.
- 24. Although we do not tithe primarily to secure a blessing, but to give acknowledgement to God as the source of all blessing and victory, tithing is catalyst sustaining the cycle of the blessing.
- 25. Tithes and offerings produce a divine response of blessing on the tither.
- 26. The tithe secures a blessing of productivity in all that you put your hands to.
- 27. Tithes and offerings precipitate 'poured out' blessings from heaven's many windows.
- 28. The blessedness of the tither is recognizable to others.
- 29. Tithes and offerings facilitate spiritual maturity.
- 30. The tithe sets forth a foundation for God's work in our lives to advance to maturity both in terms of personal development and the pursuit of His will.
- 31. Those who give tithes and offerings access and activate specific revelations of God's nature.
- 32. God rebukes the devourer for the tither's sake.
- 33. Tithing preserves and protects us economically.
- 34. The one who tithes taps into the indestructible dimension of the Melchisedek priesthood.
- 35. In addition to your regular tithe, it is advisable that individuals also tithe as a form of personal saving to finance costs associated with special conferences and/or schools of ministry.
- 36. From time to time, as discerned and determined by the senior leadership, a local Church may use some of the tithe collected to minister to the physical needs of the destitute and poor, or those in dire need.
- 37. There are weightier matters than tithing, viz. love, justice, mercy and faithfulness, yet the tithe is not to be neglected.
- 38. The tithe must not degenerate into a system of Pharisaical religious works that are not reflective of a righteous lifestyle.
- 39. Your obedience in tithing does not substitute for disobedience in other areas.
- 40. Tithing sets forth a foundation and pattern of Divine providence and prosperity for the

More Excellent Giving; Copyright © 2012 Randolph Barnwell. Reproduction in any form is permissible, provided that no monetary profit is gained. [Email: randolph@eternalsound.co.za; rbarnwell@mweb.co.za; Website: www.randolphbarnwell.com; Telephone: (+27) 83 2729 579] next generation, positioning them for a life of blessedness.

- 41. No matter what your financial state, no-one is exempt from tithing; no-one can afford not to tithe.
- 42. Paul's teaching on finances and his exhortation to give, by far exceed the expectation of the tithe.

Tithing

Questions and Issues for Personal Review and Group Discussion

- 1. Provide a definition of 'the tithe'.
- 2. Argue for the relevance of the practice of tithing today.
- 3. Highlight three specific recorded incidents of tithing in the Old Testament.
- 4. 'Institutional Tithing' versus 'Tithing to Persons' has been a longstanding debate. Offer your perspective with clear biblical validation.
- 5. What should the only motivation for tithing be?
- 6. In what sense is the tithe 'holy unto the Lord'?
- 7. What is the tithe primarily to be used for?
- 8. What is your understanding of the principle of 'the tithe of tithe'?
- 9. Various forms of tithing existed in the Old Testament. Discuss two of these, suggesting a modernday contemporary application of the principle.
- 10. Does the non-return of the tithe give possible indication to a deeper spiritual problem? Substantiate your view.
- 11. Should monthly income earners determine the tithe from gross or net salaries? Justify your perspective scripturally.
- 12. Fully review and discuss the full ambit of blessings attendant with tithing.
- 13. Jesus discussed the tithe once. Isolate the key elements we could glean from His discussion.
- 14. In what regard is the priesthood and tithing connected?
- 15. Argue for the relevance of tithing today.

Personal Notes on 'God's Kingdom Economy'					

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Melchisedek Tithe

You, who pursue righteousness, look to Abraham. Isaiah 51:1-2

Gaspects of our lives, not only the so-called 'spiritual' aspects. You are not completely free until you are economically or financially free. The purpose of the present teachings is to unveil God's heart for his sons to live without anxiety and worry in the face of their personal and corporate needs. This is kingdom reality. High levels of anxiety or worry result from a failure to understand and fully appropriate our status, rights, privileges and primary pursuit as the sons of God and Kingdom citizens.

The first (Gen. 14) and last (Heb.7) mention of tithes in Scripture concerns Melchisedek's receipt of tithes from Abraham. Abraham's example of tithing sets forth for us a powerful pattern of tithing for us to copy. The writer of the book of Hebrews draws reference to his practice of tithing as superior to the practice of tithing under the Law, given through Moses. As was already indicated, Abraham tithed hundreds of years before the Law was given. It is no coincidence that the first and last word in Scripture on tithing revolves around the example of Abraham's tithe to Melchisedek. Let us examine this more closely.

THE BLESSING ON ABRAHAM

As sons of God, we have a rich heritage in the person of Abraham. One of the first things God said to him was that **he would be blessed**. We have the right to walk in the fullness of the promises given to Abraham through our faith in Christ Jesus.

Genesis 12:1-4

- 1 Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you;
- 2 And I WILL MAKE YOU A GREAT NATION, and I WILL BLESS YOU, and MAKE YOUR NAME GREAT; and so YOU SHALL BE BLESSING;
- 3 And I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And IN YOU all the families of the earth will BE BLESSED"
- 4 So Abram went forth as the Lord had spoken to him; **and Lot went with him**. Now Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

Galatians 3:8,9,14

- 8 The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "All the nations will be blessed in you."
- 9 So then **those who are of faith** are **blessed with Abraham**, the believer.
- 14 in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

As Abraham was blessed, so are we. This blessing is not only a reference to salvation, but it embraces being blessed financially and materially as well. We need to thoroughly examine details of the promises made to Abraham to fully comprehend all the dynamics involved.

LOOKING TO ABRAHAM

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In Isaiah 51:1-2, we are encouraged to look to Abraham and Sarah, the rock from which we are hewn.

Isaiah 51:1,2

- 1 "Listen to me, **you who pursue righteousness**, Who seek the Lord: Look to the rock from which you were hewn and to the quarry from which you were dug.
- 2 **"Look to Abraham** your father and to Sarah who gave birth to you in pain; When he was but **one I called him**, Then I **BLESSED him and MULTIPLIED him**."

In our pursuit of practical righteousness (verse 1), Abraham's life is set forth as one worthy of emulation in many respects, particularly in the area of his expression of tithing from his unforeseen, unplanned acquisition of material wealth to another individual (Melchisedek) that provided spiritual nourishment and oversight to him.

Look = nabat = to watch, to regard with pleasure or favour, to keenly observe, to look intently, to scan.¹⁷⁵

Note that here it is the 'blessedness' of Abraham that is emphasized, and specifically, the power of God to **multiply one man** into a **nation** through blessing him. Highlighted here is the kingdom principle of enlargement, growth and expansion. It is this aspect of his blessed nature in this verse that we are instructed to scan, to keenly observe, to watch and regard with pleasure and keen interest.

Whilst the scope of the promised blessings to Abraham is vast, we shall for the purposes of our present study, only focus on those issues that pertain to finances.

INACCURATE ALLIANCES PREVENTS SIGHT OF PROPHETIC DESTINY

God first unveiled his promise to Abraham in **Genesis 12.** Lot, his nephew, tags along with him as he obeys God's command to leave the environment in which he was reared. Certain environments are not conducive for the fulfillment of divine promises. Also, certain relationships are not conducive in facilitating the prophetic promise of the Lord coming to pass in your life. Lot represents an inaccurate alliance and association. What Lot represents is thoroughly dealt with in my study manual entitled 'Hebron, The Place of Covenant'. See Gen 13:14-16 - The moment Abraham cut off this relationship, the land that was promised was clearly and completely unveiled to him – he envisioned the full ambit of the entire geographical sphere and spiritual vastness of the divine promise.

Genesis 13:14-18

- 14 THE Lord said to Abram, AFTER LOT SEPARATED FROM HIM "NOW LIFT UP YOUR EYES and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward;
- 15 for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever.
- 16 "I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth, so that if anyone can number the dust of the earth, then your descendants can also be numbered.
- 17 "Arise, walk about the land through its length and breadth; for I will give it to you."
- 18 Then Abram **moved his tent** and came and dwelt by the **oaks of Mamre**, which are **in Hebron**, and there he built an altar to the Lord.

In Gen.12, Abraham is promised the following, viz.

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He would become a great nation.

God would bless him.

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- He would become a blessing.
- Those who bless him will be blessed by God.
- Those who curse him will be cursed by God.
 - In him all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

In Genesis 13, after God purifies his relationships in that he separates from Lot, God shows Abraham the context in which this promise would begin to manifest – he is shown the land; AND God also shows him the global sphere and extent of the promise. He looked "from the place he was". This phrase, in the original Hebrew, has figurative reference to 'condition of mind'¹⁷⁶ and hence suggests that he saw or perceived with his mind literally the entire Earth or planet. Also the full expanse of his descendants is unveiled to him – he

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In our pursuit of righteousness, Abraham's life is set forth as one worthy of emulation in many respects, particularly in the area of his expression of tithing from his unforeseen, unplanned acquisition of material wealth, to another individual that provided spiritual nourishment and oversight to him.

would not be able to number them just as the dust of the Earth cannot be numbered.

WHAT WAS MELCHISEDEK TO ABRAHAM?

After the capture of Lot by a coalition of four kings, Abraham defeats these kings and rescues Lot, bringing with him also the booty or spoil from the war. He immediately seeks out Melchisedek, King of Salem (Jerusalem), who functioned as priest or representative of God.

Genesis 14:17-24

- 17 Then after his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley).
- 18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High.
- 19 He blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth;
- 20 And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand." He gave him a tenth of all.
- 21 The king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give the people to me and take the goods for yourself."
- Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have sworn to the Lord God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth,
- 23 that I will not take a thread or a sandal thong or anything that is yours, for fear you would say, 'I have made Abram rich.'
- 24 "I will take nothing except what the young men have eaten, and the share of the men who went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their share."

Melchisedek symbolically functioned as Abraham's set-man or apostolic oversight. After the battle, Abraham returns to him in the Valley of the Kings. Melchisedek serves him bread and wine which are symbols of spiritual nourishment – Bread, the Word of the Lord; and Wine, the Revelation of the Word. Your spiritual father must provide spiritual nourishment for you in these respects.

Something we established in the previous chapter merits repetition here:

Abraham did not tithe to secure some future reward or blessing. He simply acted spontaneously to bless Melchisidek in acknowledgement of God who afforded him victory in battle. Abraham tithed after he had gained the victory, not before. He functioned in God's blessed-ness and favour over his life. He tithes in acknowledgement of his blessed state and not to secure a blessing, although Melchisidek blessed him afterwards. Tithing will definitely bring with it a series of blessings, but these are natural consequences of our financial obedience. Our desire in tithing is to honour God, gratefully acknowledge HIS blessing in our lives and His continued blessing over us. Tithing is a key that maintains the state of blessedness in the life of the believer. From an already blessed position, Abraham tithed to Melchisedek. At that impartation of the blessing, Abraham offers tithes to him. It seems then that the tithe is a key catalyst that ensures the cycle of blessing.

This tithe is an acknowledgement of the one who gives you bread and wine – who provides you with spiritual grace and resource so that you function optimally and efficiently in your own calling in God. Melchisedek blesses Abraham - confirming what God had already said to him earlier in Gen.12. That which was prophetically promised was now echoed and affirmed by an earthly priest or spiritual father. At this point, the blessing becomes further activated. Melchisedek activates a prophetic promise of blessing over Abraham. Then

Melchisedek unveils to Abraham that it was God who gave him victory in the battle. See verse 20 : "And <u>blessed</u>

be God Most High, Who has <u>delivered your enemies into your hand.</u>" In response to all of this Abraham gives Melchisedek a tithe of all the spoil/booty from the war. Now this was taking place at least 430 years before the Law under Moses was given in which tithing was instituted as a regular practice. Here the tithe was given not to an institution, but to a man, one who was regarded as a priest – a representation of God Himself.

Applying this principle today, one should tithe to your spiritual father of any SPOIL that you receive. This is not the tithe that you tithe off of your gross monthly income. In our previous chapter, we concluded that even tithes given off our monthly gross salaries are to be brought to our 'storehouse', which strictly speaking, is not the 'local church' per se, but the 'store' in 'house', being primarily the set-man or spiritual father, together with other persons who function to ensure that the house is well-nourished and effectively administrated. The reader is encouraged to rehearse principles number 2, 5, 11 and 24 of the previous chapter before proceeding.

In the context of Genesis 14, Abraham did not tithe off his produce or increase generated from the field. **He** gave a tithe off an increase to his wealth that he attained by collecting spoil in a battle in which God gave him victory. In addition to tithing from your recurrent earning of your monthly income or profit, you should tithe from any unusual or extraordinary financial gain to your set-man or spiritual father.

Examples of such finances received would be the receipt of any **unexpected monies**, not as a result of your normal monthly or weekly work efforts. Dr Sagie Govender, who does the work of an Apostle, termed this the 'Melchisedek Tithe'. This term is not found anywhere in the Bible - it is simply a term coined and

More Excellent Giving; Copyright © 2012 Randolph Barnwell. Reproduction in any form is permissible, provided that no monetary profit is gained. [Email: randolph@eternalsound.co.za; rbarnwell@mweb.co.za; Website: www.randolphbarnwell.com; Telephone: (+27) 83 2729 579] employed to describe this act. It is an acknowledgement of the one who gives you bread and wine – who provides you with spiritual grace and resource so that you function optimally and efficiently in your own calling in God.

Those who labour in the Word are worthy of double honour. Preparing bread and wine (spiritual nourishment) is a time consuming and involved process. Set men worth their salt, are diligent and serious about waiting upon God to provide a spiritual meal to those they are leading. Elders who rule well are to be given double honour especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.

1 Timothy 5:17-18

- 17 The elders who **rule well** are to be **considered worthy of** <u>double honor</u>, especially those who **work hard at preaching and teaching**.
- 18 For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages."

Notice here that giving double honour is directly linked with the giving of money or wages. 'You shall not muzzle the ox while it is threshing', a phrase that Paul used elsewhere, is teaching that spiritual leaders who minister spiritual things have a right to receive material things from people.

1 Corinthians 9:7-11

- 7 Who at any time serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat the fruit of it? Or who tends a flock and does not use the milk of the flock?
- 8 I am not speaking these things according to human judgment, am I? Or does not the Law also say these things?
- 9 For it is written in the Law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing." God is not concerned about oxen, is He?
- 10 Or is **He speaking** altogether **for our sake**? Yes, for our sake it was written, because the **plowman ought to plow in** hope, and **the thresher to thresh in hope of sharing the crops**.
- 11 If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?

If you have a good and accurate spiritual father, who is free of covetousness and the love of money, and who takes his role in providing spiritual oversight and nourishment for you seriously and does so to the best of his God-given grace and ability, then give double honour by sowing financially into his life to the best degree that you are able.

The name 'Melchisedek' means 'King of Righteousness' and also 'King of Justice'¹⁷⁷**/ 'King of Peace'** (Hebrews 7:2). Specifically, if your spiritual father / set-man is characterized by these two dimensions, righteousness and peace, it should be a privilege to honour him financially. (See Isaiah 60:17 and James 3:18)

Isaiah 60:17"Instead of bronze I will bring gold, And instead of iron I will bring silver, And instead of wood,
bronze, And instead of stones, iron. And I will make peace your administrators And righteousness
your overseers

James 3:18 And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace

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DID ABRAHAM REALLY TITHE?

Anti-tithers often raise the argument that Abraham did not really tithe to Melchisedek because he did not give anything from his own personal wealth, but gave goods which were in essence 'goods' that belonged to the King of Sodom.

Gen 14:21-24

- 21 The king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give the people to me and take the **goods** for yourself."
- Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have sworn to the Lord God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth,
- 23 that I will not take a thread or a sandal thong or anything **that is yours**, for fear you would say, 'I have made Abram rich.'
- 24 "I will take nothing except what **the young men have eaten**, and **the share of the men** who went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their share."

It was an accepted custom, that **the victor in a battle had a legitimate claim on any goods attained in a war**. The King of Sodom would not even had seen these 'goods' again if it were not for Abraham's intervention in the war. Remember, the King of Sodom and his four allies were utterly defeated by Chedaloamer and his three allies. Abraham, together with the three allies, Aner, Eschol and Mamre, successfully rout the enemy and as a reward collect the spoils from war. Melchisedek attributes Abraham's success to God.

<u>Gen 14:20</u> And blessed be God Most High, Who has <u>delivered your enemies into your hand</u>." He gave him a tenth of all.

Both ancient historical records¹⁷⁸, as well as evidence in the following portions of Scripture all indicate that spoils from war become the possession of the victor and that allied victors could also share the spoil – Deut. 20:10-14; 1 Sam 30:20-31; Num. 31:27; Josh 22:8. The king of Sodom inaccurately used the word 'goods' (Gen 14:21). The writer of the book of Hebrew, correctly describes these 'goods' as SPOIL.

Heb 7:4 See how great this man was to whom Abraham the patriarch gave a tenth of the spoils!

Spoils = Akrothinion = top of the heap, best of the booty.¹⁷⁹

The ten percent of the spoils from war that Abraham gave to Melchisedek, represented the best part all the spoil from the war – the top of heap – of the spoils. He could not have given away something which he could not legally lay claim to. The fact that Melchisedek, who acknowledged Abraham's divinely aided victory in war and whose righteousness is highlighted in Scripture, received the tithe, indicates that these spoils did indeed belong to Abraham. If they did not belong to Abraham, Melchisedek, a righteous and peaceful man, would not have received stolen goods. Further to this, Abraham gave some of the spoils to his three allies, Aner, Eschol and Mamre. How could he give away that which is not his? It is also interesting to note that Abraham first tithed a tenth of the spoil to Melchisedek before entering into a discussion with the King of Sodom about the remaining spoil.

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What did Abraham do with 90% left over?

- Firstly his 318 young men who fought with him ate a part of it.
- His allies, Aner, Eschol and Mamre were given a share exactly how much, we do not know.
- The balance was given back to the King of Sodom, because Abraham, knowing what kind of individual he was, did not want him to boast that he made Abraham rich.

The fact that Abraham chose to do this, does not negate his legitimate claim to the spoil as his rightful possession.

THE BLESSING OF THE MELCHISIDEK TITHE

Genesis 15:1-6

- 1 AFTER THESE THINGS the <u>word of the Lord came</u> to Abram in a vision, saying, Do not fear, Abram, I am a SHIELD to you; Your reward shall be very great."
- 2 Abram said, "O Lord God, what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?"

God's nature as 'Shield' and 'Reward' is manifested in the life of the one who tithes to His servants.

- 3 And Abram said, "Since You have given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir."
- 4 Then behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "This man will not be your heir; but one who will come **forth from your own body, he shall be your heir."**
- 5 And He took him outside and said, "Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them."
- 6 And He said to him, **"So shall your descendants be**. Then he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.

1. THE WORD OF LORD COMES TO YOU

Note verse 1 : 'AFTER THESE THINGS, the word of the Lord came', i.e. after he paid tithes to Melchisidek of all his spoil. Giving a tithe of your spoil (unusual / extraordinary victory) to your set-man has the capacity to unlock for you greater clarity and details concerning your prophetic future. The Word of the Lord will come to you and remove the blur that there may be in reference to just how the will of God will be played out in your life.

At this point, further clarity is given to the promise over Abraham's life. How you handle your finances presently, will have a significant impact on your spiritual future. This is especially significant in the use of finances in reference to giving to your spiritual father / set-man – the representative 'Melchisidek' in your life. There are examples of people, whose life and destiny was either negatively or positively impacted, dependent on their attitude to money and giving.

2. GOD NATURE'S UNVEILED AND EXPRESSED

a. SHIELD AND REWARD

Note in verse 1 the Lord promises to be a 'shield' to Abraham and his 'exceeding great reward' (NKJV)

<u>NASV</u>: "Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great."
 <u>NKJV</u>: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward."

More Excellent Giving; Copyright © 2012 Randolph Barnwell. Reproduction in any form is permissible, provided that no monetary profit is gained. [Email: randolph@eternalsound.co.za; rbarnwell@mweb.co.za; Website: www.randolphbarnwell.com; Telephone: (+27) 83 2729 579] As is seen, this word 'reward' has reference to material benefits. God is literally saying to Abraham, 'I will personally determine and manage your pay cheque from this point onwards'. Abraham secures future material blessings and becomes a multi-millionaire, passing this legacy on to Isaac and also to Jacob.

Abraham tithed to Melchisidek as the representative of God Most High. Abraham realized that His success in the battle was because of the promised blessing over his life (Gen.12) and that God who possesses the Heaven and Earth was solely responsible for his victory.

b. THE LORD GOD MOST HIGH, POSSESOR OF HEAVEN AND EARTH

The specific nature of God that is highlighted here is two-fold :

- 1. God Most High, which in the Hebrew is 'El Elyon'¹⁸¹
- 2. God the possessor of Heaven and Earth.

God possesses two dimensions - Heaven and Earth. As the source of his blessing, Abraham tithes to God in the person of Melchisidek, and by this he releases an activation of a further dimension upon his prophetic promise made in Genesis 12 and 13. In Genesis 13, his descendants are described as the **dust or sand** on the entire earth, but now after he has tithed they are described as the **stars of the heavens**. By this is brought to bear upon the unfolding promise over his life, a heavenly supernatural dimension to the promise. Psalm 19 explains that the heavens declare the glory of God and that the stars show forth his handiwork - they speak the intentions of the Lord. His descendants would now be stars reflecting the glory of the Lord. This is prophetically depictive of God's grand purpose in reflecting His awesome glory in and through mature sons of God scattered all across the face of the earth.

The will of God played out in his life in terms of multitudes of descendants on the earth will simply be a mirror reflection of that reality determined in the heavens. Heaven's will is always done on

Earth. He is reassured that what is to transpire in terms of the prophetic promise over his life is already settled in the heavens. This then brings a sense of confirmation and certainty within him regarding the will of God for his future. His walk into his prophetic destiny on earth is already established in the heavens. These experiences can be ours too!

The grace and ability to 'possess' is released upon the tither.

The Hebrew word translated 'Possessor' means the following:

To erect, to create; By extension to procure, especially by purchase (causatively sell); By implication to own - attain, buy.¹⁸²

More Excellent Giving; Copyright © 2012 Randolph Barnwell. Reproduction in any form is permissible, provided that no monetary profit is gained. [Email: <u>randolph@eternalsound.co.za</u>; rbarnwell@mweb.co.za; Website: <u>www.randolphbarnwell.com</u>; Telephone: (+27) 83 2729 579] Implied in this word is not simply the idea of the creation of something but also the act of **buying back or redeeming in order to attain** or procure. Embedded within this word is the suggested ideas of **creative entrepreneurial engagement** and **successful Kingdom business activity**.

'Possessor of Heaven and Earth' thus implies God possesses both realms. Heaven and Earth are the objects of procurement or attainment. Abraham's promises included actual physical real estate – land. So when he tithed to Melchisidek, Melchisidek releases a blessing of God, the possessor of heaven and earth, upon him, thereby imparting a grace to him and all generations in him, to procure land and also to become stewards of Kingdom businesses.

In conclusion, Psalm 24:1 clearly indicates that the earth is the Lord's and all that is within it – i.e. every resource within the earth belongs to the Lord.

Psalm 24:1

(Al	MP) THE EAF	RTH is the Lord's, and the fullness of it , the world and they who dwell in it.
(BI	3E) The ear	th is the Lord's, with all its wealth; the world and all the people living in it.
(N.	ASB) The ear	th is the LORD'S, and all it contains, The world, and those who dwell in it.
Fullness = melo m	elo, melo =	What fills, makes full, fullness;
		Abundance;
		What fills something up or out;
		That which fills; the entire contents. ¹⁸³

Every resource within the earth, possessed by the Lord, is earmarked for stewardship by His sons. Tithing is key in embarking upon this responsibility. All the principles embodied within the words 'Possessor of Heaven and Earth" is the preserve of the one who is financially obedient in the area of tithing to one's spiritual storehouse, the 'spoil' of certain financial victories.

To re-iterate Isaiah 51:2, **'look to Abraham'** and copy his example. According to Romans 4:11, Abraham is the **'father of all who believe'**, and Romans 4: 12 exhorts us a **follow in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham.** In Genesis 18:19, God says concerning Abraham, "For I have chosen him, so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD ...". Abraham was chosen because he would transfer the principles by which he regulated his life to successive generations. You and I too as part of his lineage, through Christ, will do well to 'do as he did'.

Great grace to you, from God Most High, the Possessor of Heaven and Earth!

Summation of Melchisedek Tithing Principles

- 1. In our pursuit of practical righteousness, Abraham's life is set forth as one worthy of emulation in many respects, particularly in the area of his expression of tithing from his unforeseen, unplanned acquisition of material wealth to another individual that provided spiritual nourishment and oversight to him.
- 2. The first and last mention of tithing in Scripture concerns Abraham's practice of the principle.
- 3. The specific aspect of Abraham's blessed nature that we are instructed to scan, to keenly observe, to watch and regard with pleasure and keen interest, is the degree to which God blessed him in that he was one man who ultimately became a multitude.
- 4. Abraham's blessing, amongst many things, embodies the Kingdom principle of enlargement, growth and expansion.
- 5. The practical realization of prophetic destiny and blessing demands relocation to an accurate environment conducive for the fulfillment of divine promises.
- 6. Inaccurate alliances and associations have to be terminated in order to more clearly perceive, comprehend and envision the blessing that is prophetically promised.
- 7. Melchisidek symbolically functioned as Abraham's set-man, spiritual father or apostolic oversight. Your spiritual father must provide spiritual nourishment for you.
- 8. Abraham's tithe was a key catalyst that ensured the cycle of blessing is his life.
- 9. Abraham's blessing over Melchisedek activated an existing prophetic promise of blessing over his life.
- 10. God afforded victory to Abraham in a battle and he tithed to Melchisedek, a representation of God in his life, in acknowledgement of Him.
- 11. In addition to tithing from your recurrent earning of your monthly income or profit, you should tithe from any unusual or extraordinary financial gain to your set-man or spiritual father.
- 12. This tithe is an acknowledgement of the one who gives you bread and wine who provides you with spiritual grace and resource so that you function optimally and efficiently in your own calling in God.
- 13. God's nature as 'Shield' and 'Reward' is manifested in the life of the one who tithes to His servants.
- 14. This tithe has the effect of bringing greater clarity to the purposes of God in one's life.
- 15. The grace and ability to 'possess' is released upon the tither.
- 16. The nature of God as El Elyon God Most High the one highly elevated above all is activated by the tithe.

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Melchisedek Tithe

Questions and Issues for Personal Review and Group Discussion

- 1. What Melchisedek represent in the life of Abraham ?
- 2. What specific aspect of Abraham's life does God, through the prophet Isaiah, call us to keenly Observe?
- 3. What is symbolically represented in Melchisedek's serving of bread and wine to Abraham?
- 4. What was the spur or motivation in Abraham tithing to Melchisedek?
- 5. Would the spoil that Abraham received as a victor in the war be considered his personal possession? Explain.
- 6. This tithe released specific blessings on Abraham. What were they?
- 7. What particular dimensions of God's nature are revealed and activated as a result of this tithe?

Personal Notes on 'God's Kingdom Economy'					

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'And Offerings'

With all my ability I have provided for the house of my God. 1 Chron. 29:2

n Malachi 3:8 God says that His people have robbed Him **'in tithes <u>AND OFFERINGS'</u>**. Tithing lays the foundation for our systematic, continual giving to God. We give our tithes – or more correctly 'return our tithes to God' because it is God's rightful portion. Beyond our tithes, whatever we give above this is offerings – tithes are returned; offerings are given.

The tithe withholds the 'devourer' in that God Almighty 'rebukes' (chides, reproves, corrupts) him; the tithe is key to sustaining the cycle of blessing in one's life; offerings is key to accessing the blessings of increase. Those who give ten percent of their gross earnings to God in tithes are still walking in disobedience if they are not giving offerings also. The tithe belongs to the Lord (Lev. 27:30). When you tithe you are simply returning to God that which is already His – you really have not given anything from yourself, since it never belonged to you in the first place. God requires HIS ten percent (tithe) from your gross income and allows you to use the 90 % of your income that is left over. However, if you use all of the 90% that is left, you are still robbing God, because He expects you to give offerings, the amount being determined solely by you.

The Scriptures provide an absolute amount that constitutes the tithe, viz. 10% of gross earnings. First fruits is determined by that income which is accrued 'first' (refer to the chapter on First Fruits for actual examples). When it comes to offerings, no definitive percentage or amount is specified, but the Scriptures do provide the followings guidelines which are further explained later in this chapter, viz.,

- ✓ Give offerings, the amount that you DECIDE IN YOUR HEART2 Cor. 9:7✓ Give offerings ACCORDING to your ABILITY2 Cor. 8:3
 - ✓ Give offerings BEYOND your ABILITY
 - ✓ Give offerings in proportion to HOW God has PROSPERED YOU

✓ Give based on **PROPHETIC INSIGHT AND UNDERSTANDING**

[Refer to Kingdom Economics Series Part 2]

2 Cor. 8:3

1 Cor. 16:2

This dimension of giving – offerings – is a significant determinant of whether or not one will experience the fullness of the divine blessing attendant with financial giving. To determine your tithe, you need a calculator. Your first fruit is determined by what income is received first. When it comes to offerings, because it is left largely to the giver to decide what to give, it is in this domain of giving where the individual brings his will, desire, expectation, faith

The tithe withholds the 'devourer' and is key to sustaining the cycle of blessing in one's life; offerings are key to accessing the blessings of increase.

and greater or more precise obedience as he has to attune his prophetic ear to listen accurately to the Spirit of Lord, and follow through. For this reason, the blessing attendant with offerings is significant.

Israel was expected to give a range of offerings to the Lord, for example :

Deuteronomy 12:6

But you shall seek the Lord at the place which the Lord your God will choose from all your tribes, to establish His name there for His dwelling, and there you shall come.

your han		you shall bring your burnt offerings , your sacrifices , your tithes, the contribution of and, your votive offerings , your freewill offerings , and the firstborn of your herd your flock.	
Votive Offerings	=	A solemn promise to God or the thing promised; Several times, the word refers to the specific words given in a vow. ¹⁸⁴	
Freewill offerings	= = =	 nedabah = a 'willing offering' 'Freewill' means "willingness, a freewill offering, a voluntary gift". As an adverb, it means 'willingly, freely, spontaneously, voluntarily'.¹⁸⁵ 	

This term can denote the state of being which allows a person to offer a gift or a favour to someone else without any thought of return or payback. The favour is not given out of any obligation owed by the giver; rather, it is the **result of an overflow from an abundance within the heart.**

'Freewill offerings' signify an offering, a gift, or a sacrifice given voluntarily, as **opposed to one offered in dutiful fulfillment of an obligation or vow** (Lev. 22:23). Many from the congregation of Israel whose hearts were willing gave of their possessions as freewill offerings for the building of the Tent of Meeting and its services (Ex. 35:29; 36:3; 2 Chronicles. 35; Ezra 1:4; 3:5; 8:28; Ezek. 46:12; Amos 4:5).¹⁸⁶

The freewill offering was a voluntary contribution. With regards to freewill offerings, the emphasis here is on giving that **flows spontaneously, expressing devotion to the Lord**. It is not a gift out of a sense of duty, nor to secure promised blessings.

The global purposes of God, financially, are built on first fruits, tithes and offerings. Over and above one's first fruits and tithes, offerings should also be given abundantly to propel the purposes of God forward. This may include giving into special building projects or financing any asset necessary for the facilitation of divine purpose.

EXAMPLE 1: FREEWILL OFFERINGS FOR THE BUILDING OF THE TABERNACLE OF MOSES

Exodus 25:1-9

- 1 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Tell the sons of Israel **TO RAISE A CONTRIBUTION FOR ME**; from every man whose heart moves him you shall raise **MY CONTRIBUTION**.
- 3 "This is the contribution which you are to raise from them: gold, silver and bronze,
- 4 blue, purple and scarlet material, fine linen, goat hair,
- 5 rams' skins dyed red, porpoise skins, acacia wood,
- 6 oil for lighting, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense,
- 7 onyx stones and setting stones for the ephod and for the breastpiece.
- 8 "Let them construct a sanctuary FOR ME that I MAY DWELL AMONG THEM.
- 9 "According to all that I am going to show you, as the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture, just so you shall construct it.

According to this passage, the purpose of the Tabernacle was so that God would 'dwell among them'. Moses had to build the Tabernacle exactly according to the pattern shown to him by the Lord. He had a 'vision' from the Lord. **Every true vision from the Lord must ultimately result in greater**

Giving to Kingdom projects is the 'Lord's contribution'

expressions of the Lord Himself in the earth. God will resource that which is focussed on facilitating a greater manifestation of Himself in the earth.

In Moses' day, he is instructed to **appeal to the people** to make freewill offerings of all the materials to be used in the construction of the Tabernacle. **Every true vision from the Lord will attract to itself people** who will finance and resource the needs of the vision.

Exodus 35:1-22

- 1 Then Moses assembled all the congregation of the sons of Israel, and said to them, **"These are the things that the Lord has commanded you to do:**
- 2 "For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day you shall have a holy day, a sabbath of complete rest to the Lord; whoever does any work on it shall be put to death.
- "You shall not kindle a fire in any of your dwellings on the sabbath day."
 Moses spoke to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, saying, "This is the thing which the Lord has commanded, saying,
- 5 'Take from among you a contribution to the Lord; whoever is of A WILLING HEART let him bring it as the LORD'S CONTRIBUTION : gold, silver, and bronze,
- and blue, purple and scarlet material, fine linen, goats' hair, and rams' skins dyed red, and porpoise skins, and acacia wood, and oil for lighting, and spices for the anointing oil, and for the fragrant incense, and onyx stones and setting stones for the ephod and for the breastpiece.
 Tabernacle Workmen

10-16 'Let every skillful man among you come, and make all that the Lord has commanded: the

tabernacle, its tent and its covering, its hooks and its boards, its bars, its pillars, and its sockets;

the ark and its poles, the mercy seat, and the curtain of the screen; the table and its poles, and all its utensils, and the bread of the Presence; the lampstand also for the light and its utensils and its

lamps and the oil for the light; and the altar of incense and its poles, and the anointing oil and the fragrant incense, and the screen for the doorway at the entrance of the tabernacle; the altar of burnt offering with its bronze grating, its poles, and all its utensils, the basin and its stand; the hangings of the court, its pillars and its sockets, and the screen for the gate of the court; the pegs of the tabernacle and the pegs of the court and their cords; the woven garments for ministering in the holy place, the holy garments for Aaron the priest and the garments of his sons, to minister as priests.' "

- 20 Then all the congregation of the sons of Israel departed from Moses' presence.
- 21 Everyone whose HEART STIRRED HIM and everyone whose SPIRIT MOVED him came and brought the LORD'S CONTRIBUTION for the work of the tent of meeting and for all its service and for the holy garments.
- 22 Then all whose hearts moved them, both men and women, came and brought brooches and earrings and signet rings and bracelets, all articles of gold; so did EVERY MAN PRESENTED AN OFFERING of gold to the Lord.

Note that their giving/offerings is described as the LORD'S CONTRIBUTION. They were not giving to a man – although the items would be brought to Moses – their gifts were seen as been rendered to the Lord Himself. It is important that people see their financial contributions toward a specific God-ordained vision as being given unto the Lord Himself although human vessels receive and administrate this.

Contribution = Terumah = a present offering, a gift, a tribute, a heave offering (a heavy shoulder)¹⁸⁷

This word is rendered as '**heave offering'** in some versions of the Bible. Heave offerings were raised by the priests in a high special motion – apparently up and high (as distinguished from the wave offering which

was moved horizontally from side to side). Traditionally, it consisted of agricultural produce – the first fruits of the harvest or even part of an animal sacrifice. Tradition has it that a 'wave offering' acknowledged the Lord as ruler of earth, and a 'heave offering' acknowledged the Lord as ruler of heaven. The right shoulder of the priests used in presenting thank offerings was called the heave shoulder.

In the context of the verses above, this 'contribution' referred to and included precious metals, stone, wood and skins to construct the Tabernacle in the wilderness. The contribution being lifted up or elevated was symbolic of consecrating it to the Lord. As some of the verses above point out, this actually then becomes **the Lord's contribution – in a sense it is reserved for the Lord and His purposes**.

The heave offerings were carried on the right shoulder of the priests. Shoulder symbolises governmental strength and rule (see Isaiah 9:6-9). The 'right' shoulder also signifies authority. Presenting these offerings for the building of the Tabernacle, was in the context of Israel's journeying in the wilderness, representative of the place where God's glory, power and presence was physically located. Their giving and offerings then are indicative of their own participation in seeing the government of God being established among them and upon the earth. As we, in this season, give financially in cash or kind and in the offering of our gifts and talents, it will be symbolic and prophetic of a greater spiritual furnishing and spiritual authority that God will bring to the corporate house.

Also, as we heave it to the Lord as the possessor of the heavens – we unlock every heavenly resource within the Christ that we would need in order to accurately and efficiently fulfill the purposes of God.

NOTE THE WILLINGNESS WITH WHICH THE PEOPLE GAVE.

Each one gave as his heart stirred him up or as his spirit moved him.

Stir up = nasa =	to lift, to carry, to take away. ¹⁸⁸		
Moved = nadab =	to present spontaneously; to offer willingly ¹⁸⁹		
	this word described the free, voluntary desire of the heart to give of		
	oneself or of one's resources to the service of the Lord. ¹⁹⁰		

Exodus 35:5 indicates that the people had a <u>WILLING HEART</u> to bring the heave offering as the Lord's contribution.

Willing = Nadiyb = willing, prompt, generous, liberal, noble¹⁹¹

The Israelites who were of willing hearts gave offerings to the Lord, jewellery and gold for the construction of the Tabernacle and its accessories. Their willingness to give also included <u>A PROMPTNESS</u> in giving – they did not defer nor postpone it - there was **a sense of urgency and quickness to their actions**. Such must also be our response in giving.

The word 'willing' often denotes an attitude of heart which consents or agrees (often readily and cheerfully) to a course of action. Thus the non-giver, by withholding his gift, gives expression to his disagreement to the course of action - thus not enjoying the reward and blessing attendant with the offering.

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The word 'willing' also highlights the <u>GENEROUS NATURE</u> of the giving – the giving was magnanimous. In fact Israel was so liberal in the degree to which they gave, that Moses had to stop them after a while.

Exodus 36:1-7

- 1 "Now Bezalel and Oholiab, and every skillful person in whom the Lord has put skill and understanding to know how to perform all the work in the construction of the sanctuary, shall perform in accordance with all that the Lord has commanded."
- 2 Then Moses called Bezalel and Oholiab and every skillful person in whom the Lord had put skill, everyone whose heart stirred him, to come to the work to perform it.
- 3 They <u>received from Moses all the contributions</u> which the sons of Israel had brought to perform the work in the construction of the sanctuary. And they <u>still continued bringing</u> to him freewill offerings every morning.
- 4 And all the skillful men who were performing all the work of the sanctuary came, each from the work which he was performing,
- 5 and they said to Moses, "The people <u>are bringing much more than enough</u> for the construction work which the Lord commanded us to perform."
- 6 So Moses issued a command, and a proclamation was circulated throughout the camp, saying, "Let no man or woman any longer perform work for the contributions of the sanctuary." Thus the people were restrained from bringing any more.
- 7 For the material they had was sufficient and more than enough for all the work, to perform it.

Note that the people gave with such generosity that they were restrained from giving any more. The purposes of God in the earth cannot be built on tithes alone. Tithes were primarily used for the upkeep of the Levites. The people of God have to excel, increasing the quality and quantity of their giving, especially those who possess the 'gift of giving' (Rom. 12:8).

Moses built God a Tabernacle in which GOD could manifest Himself so that Israel's relationship with Him could be facilitated and regulated – and the people gave offerings willingly and generously for this purpose. Today, we are also 'building' something in the spirit that is going to facilitate the purposes of God in the earth and in our lives personally. But it requires finances, beyond the giving of the tithe and normal offerings. May we see the day when the measure of our offerings far exceeds the measure of our tithing, and that like Moses, we have to restrain people from giving, because we have more than enough to finance every kingdom project and agenda.

Example 2: THE GIVING FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF SOLOMON'S TEMPLE

1 Chron. 29: 1-9

- 1 Then King David said to the entire assembly, "My son Solomon, whom alone God has chosen, is still young and inexperienced and the work is great; for **the temple is NOT FOR MAN BUT FOR THE LORD GOD**.
- 2 **"Now with ALL MY ABILITY I have provided for the house of my God** the gold for the things of gold, and the silver for the things of silver, and the bronze for the things of bronze, the iron for the things of iron, and wood for the things of wood, onyx stones and inlaid stones, stones of antimony and stones of various colors, and all kinds of precious stones and alabaster in abundance.
- 3 "Moreover, **IN MY DELIGHT FOR THE HOUSE OF MY GOD**, the treasure I have of gold and silver, I give to the house of my God, over and above all that I have already provided for the holy temple,
- 4 namely, 3,000 talents of gold, of the gold of Ophir, and 7,000 talents of refined silver, to overlay the walls of the buildings;

- 5 of gold for the things of gold and of silver for the things of silver, that is, for all the work done by the craftsmen. Who then is willing to consecrate himself this day to the Lord?"
- 6 **THEN** the rulers of the fathers' households, and the princes of the tribes of Israel, and the commanders of thousands and of hundreds, with the overseers over the king's work, offered WILLINGLY
- 7 and for the service for the house of God they gave 5,000 talents and 10,000 darics of gold, and 10,000 talents of silver, and 18,000 talents of brass, and 100,000 talents of iron.
- 8 Whoever possessed precious stones gave them to the treasury of the house of the Lord, in care of Jehiel the Gershonite.
- 9 Then the people rejoiced because they had offered so WILLINGLY for they made their offering to the Lord with A WHOLE HEART and King David also rejoiced greatly.

Like Moses did, David also appeals for items to be given for the construction of the temple and emphasises that it is not for man but for the Lord. He then uses his own commitment and example of giving as a standard of giving in activating Israel to follow his example. He goes through great lengths in detailing his own personal contributions – not to boast – but he is setting an example for others to follow. **In all issues, leaders must lead by example and not by instruction or commandment only. This applies also in the area of giving.** Note in verse six above, after David demonstrated lavish giving, 'THEN', the rest of the LEADERS gave – first tier leadership – then the second tier leadership – and so forth. David's example of giving ignited and spurred the other leaders to give – and then the people gave.

'Demonstration' of a spiritual principle is more powerful in its impartational quality than the 'articulation' of the principle. Leaders should demonstrate public giving before their people, at times when led by the Spirit, even detailing the specific amounts of their personal contributions (not that of the church), to set an example to them. Biblically it is acceptable for details of the offerings of leader be made public – the Scripture above substantiates this. This must not be done

arrogantly nor braggingly – it must be done with humility and dignity. It must also not be done as an attempt to manipulate or coerce God's people to give, but to set a godly and positive example,

demonstrating active obedience that will provoke and activate people to follow the same pattern. Those who are led learn more by seeing a thing practiced in their leaders than by hearing the thing proclaimed. Demonstration of a spiritual principle is more powerful in its impartational quality than the articulation of the principle.

David prefaces his list of contributions with two important phrases that depict the spirit in which he gave, viz.:

Verse 2 :"Now with all my ABILITY I have provided for the HOUSE of my God andVerse 3 :"in my DELIGHT in the HOUSE of my God,

Here David expresses his **passion and priority for the HOUSE of God**. We are the house of God – not a physical structure. Yet we need physical structures and infrastructure to facilitate the building of the lives of people more efficiently. So when you give financially or in kind towards the physical building, symbolically, you are facilitating the maturity of the saints themselves, who gather in that structure to be tutored, trained and mentored. Your offerings reflect your passion and priority for God's plans and purposes attendant in and transmitted through 'His House'.

Ability = koah = Power, strength, capacity, means, might, substance, wealth¹⁹²

This term is also employed to communicate the satisfying of a debt.¹⁹³

The word delight is also used to indicate the **settlement of a debt** – i.e. David's concern was that the house of God will know no level of debt, thus with all his capacity he gave generously, and inspired Israel to do the same. Such will be our own experience.

The response of the people was overwhelming in two respects: viz.

- 1. the **abundant level** of their giving
- 2. the **'WILLINGNESS'** and **'WHOLE HEARTEDNESS'** with which they gave.

Their willingness cited for the great rejoicing in verse 9 is that the people gave with a 'whole heart'.

Whole = salem = full, complete, safe, whole / connotes the idea of whole or undivided.¹⁹⁴

They were not divided in heart in what they were doing. There is no double-mindedness, and their gifts gave expression to the singleness of heart with which they gave. The word 'salem' (whole) is the root word for 'shalom', peace. Thus the people gave liberally with a sense of absolute, complete joy and peace within.

EXAMPLE 3: OFFERINGS AT THE DEDICATION OF SOLOMON'S TEMPLE

At the dedication of Solomon's Temple, Israel gave so much that an additional court had to be dedicated for the sacrifices because the bronze altar was too small to contain the magnitude of the offerings given to the Lord.

1 Kings 8:62-66

- 62 Now the king and all Israel with him offered sacrifice before the Lord.
- 63 Solomon offered for the sacrifice of peace offerings, which he offered to the Lord, **22,000 oxen and 120,000** sheep. So the king and all the sons of Israel **dedicated the house of the Lord.**
- On the same day the king **consecrated the middle of the court that was before the house of the Lord**, because there he offered the burnt offering and the grain offering and the fat of the peace offerings; for the BRONZE ALTAR that was before the Lord was **TOO SMALL TO HOLD** the burnt offering and the grain offering and the fat of the peace offerings.
- 65 **So Solomon observed the feast at that time,** and all Israel with him, a great assembly from the entrance of Hamath to the brook of Egypt, before the Lord our God, **for seven days and seven more days, even fourteen days.**
- 66 On the eighth day he sent the people away and they blessed the king. Then they went to their tents joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness that the Lord had shown to David His servant and to Israel His people.

May we too also come to the day when our present structures used to facilitate the receiving of financial offerings have to be increased and upgraded to contain the abundance of offerings given to the Lord.

Your personal financial giving to God and His Kingdom should grow commensurately with your maturity in God.

At the completion of Moses' Tabernacle hundreds of years earlier,

by comparison to Solomon's dedication, a much smaller offering characterised the dedication of the bronze altar:

Numbers 7:88

and all the oxen for the sacrifice of peace offerings **24 bulls**, all the **rams 60**, the male **goats 60**, the **male lambs one year old 60**. This was the dedication offering for the altar after it was anointed.

Peace Offerings at the Dedication of Moses' Tabernacle	Peace Offerings at the Dedication of Solomon's Temple
24 bulls, 60 rams, 60 male goats 60 one year old male lambs	22,000 oxen 120,000 sheep.
Total = 204	Total = 142 000

This shows just how much Israel had progressed as a nation in the area of abundant and extravagant giving. Your personal financial giving to God and His Kingdom should grow commensurately with your maturity in God.

HOW DOES GOD ESTIMATE THE VALUE OF OUR OFFERINGS?

Proverbs 3:9,10 teaches that we must **honour God** by giving Him of our wealth and of the first fruits of all our increase. We are to honour God by giving Him an offering that is in keeping with our estimation of Him. In other words, your giving will reflect just how much you really honour God and exactly what you think of Him – how much or little you esteem or honour Him.

If you esteem God highly, the character of your giving, both in quantity and in quality, will reflect this opinion you have of God. God wants the best part of your finances.

Mark 12:41-44

- 41 And <u>He sat down opposite</u> the <u>treasury</u>, and began <u>observing how</u> the people were <u>putting money</u> into the treasury; and <u>many rich people were putting in large sums</u>.
- 42 A **poor widow** came and put **in two small copper coins**, which amount **to a cent**.
- 43 Calling His disciples to Him, He said to them, "Truly I say to you, this poor <u>widow put in more than all the</u> <u>contributors</u> to the treasury;
- 44 for they all **<u>put in out of their surplus</u>**, but she, **<u>out of her poverty</u>**, put in **<u>all she owned</u>**, all she had to live on.

Five principles can be extracted here, viz.:

- 1. God carefully observes our offerings.
- 2. God sits, keenly scrutinizing offerings in order to bring His church to financial reformation.
- 3. God keeps a more accurate record of our offerings.
- 4. God correctly appraises and evaluates the true value of our offering.
- 5. The destitute and poor are not exempt from giving.

1. GOD CAREFULLY OBSERVES OUR OFFERINGS

God alone accurately determines the true value of your offerings, a value which may be vastly different from an earthly natural estimation. Verse 41 says that Jesus began **observing how** the people were **putting money** into the treasury. Jesus was not looking casually or fleetingly at the people's offering. His 'look' was not a cursory glance. He was looking with earnest contemplation and interest. In the Greek language, there are approximately twelve words translated **'observe'**. The Greek word for **'observing'** that is used here in Mark 12:41 is the word 'theoreo'.

'theoreo' = is used of one who <u>looks at a thing with interest</u> and <u>for a purpose</u>, usually <u>indicating</u> <u>the careful observation of details</u>.¹⁹⁵

Just as Jesus looked with intent at how people gave to the treasury of the temple, He does the same today. The next time you give your tithes and offerings, imagine that our Lord is standing there right next to you **'OBSERVING' your offering**. We may not see Him literally, but He is watching how and what we give. It says specifically that He observed <u>HOW</u> they gave and then the latter verse also indicates that He scrutinized <u>HOW MUCH</u> they gave. <u>HOW</u> we give is just as important as <u>HOW MUCH</u> we give. Our attitude and heart posture must be right. The value of a financial offering is not so much determined by the absolute amount given, but by the spirit in which it is given. A huge sum of money given as an offering might be judged as a small offering by the Lord because of the spirit in which it is given. The issue of 'HOW' we give is thoroughly explored in my second manual – Part 2 in this series of Kingdom Economics – freely downloadable from my website. Suffice it to say for now that the following must characterise our giving:

WE MUST GIVE ...

- **Worshipfully**
- 4 Lovingly
- 🖶 Willingly
- 🖶 Promptly
- *Obediently*
- Cheerfully
- *Bountifully*
- 🖶 Liberally
- *Expectantly*
- *Systematically*
- *Consistently*
- *Frequently*
- 📕 In Faith
- Fearlessly
- According to your Ability
- Beyond your Ability
- *According to the measure God has prospered you*
- **4** As a reflection of yourself already GIVEN to the LORD
- As a reflection of yourself already GIVEN to your SPIRITUAL FATHER or SPIRITUAL FATHER

2. <u>GOD SITS, KEENLY SCRUTINISING OFFERINGS TO BRING HIS CHURCH TO FINANCIAL</u> <u>REFORMATION</u>

Note that verse 41 also indicates that Jesus 'sat down' opposite the treasury and observed how the people gave. In Scripture 'sitting down', especially in reference to the Lord, always indicates a position of governmental rule and judgement. Jesus is presently 'seated at the right hand of the Father'. God, as a Judge, is bringing judgement to His house in the area of finances. Also, in His capacity as a Judge he is bringing reformation, refinement and re-alignment of any financial practice in the church that is out of sync with His eternal will. Allow our God access to thoroughly appraise your accuracy, attitude and practice in the area of financial giving and financial stewardship.

3. GOD KEEPS A MORE ACCURATE RECORD OF OUR OFFERINGS

Jesus carefully observed the actual amounts given by different people as He sat next to the treasury, and in His mind, He made a record of how much was given by whom. So precise is this record that Jesus actually says of the rich people who gave, that they **'cast in much' (KJV)**, but He qualifies this **'much'** by later stating that this offering was given out of their **'surplus' / 'abundance'** or overflow. Of the poor widow, an accurate detailed amount is given: **'two small copper coins which amount to a cent'** (or **'two mites which make a farthing'** – KJV). To observe these details, Jesus must have been extremely close to the place where they actually deposited their monies. The KJV says that He sat 'against the treasury'.

God has account books for every one of us. **Numbers 7:10-83** illustrates this. This passage describes what the twelve princes of the tribes of Israel offered to God. Each prince offered exactly the same, yet each of their offerings is described in detail, item by item. Here below is the list of items offered by the first prince on the first day – but the same list is painstakingly catalogued for every other prince taking up a total of approximately 70 verses.

Numbers 7:10-17

- 10 The leaders offered the dedication offering for the altar when it was anointed, so the leaders offered their offering before the altar.
- 11 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Let them present their offering, one leader each day, for the dedication of the altar."
- 12 Now the one who presented his offering on the first day was Nahshon the son of Amminadab, of the tribe of Judah;
- 13 and his offering was one silver dish whose weight was one hundred and thirty shekels, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering;
- 14 one gold pan of ten shekels, full of incense;
- 15 one bull, one ram, one male lamb one year old, for a burnt offering;
- 16 one male goat for a sin offering;
- 17 and for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, five male lambs one year old. This was the offering of Nahshon the son of Amminadab.

From v. 18 onwards the same offerings are repeated by the eleven other princes all the way through to verse 83. God did not say, "The second prince offered the same as the first," or "All twelve princes offered this". Rather the record goes through every detailed item in the offering of each prince. The Bible is a very economical book in that it does not waste any space. When God enumerates identical offerings in this

passage, He is illustrating for us how very carefully He regards and records what we offer Him as individuals. I believe that all of our giving is recorded by the Lord in the Heavens.

4. GOD CORRECTLY APPRAISES THE TRUE VALUE OF OUR OFFERINGS

Your giving of tithes and offerings may be recorded in your church record books, but this earthly record may or may not mirror God's record of your giving. The person who gives R1000 to God is not necessarily honouring God more than the person who gives R10.

God determines how much you give by what you keep for yourself.

God is not concerned with absolute amounts per se; He is interested in relative amounts. God does not judge how much you give him by the actual amount you give; rather He judges your offering by what you have left.

Absolute amounts do not impress God. Jesus looked at what everybody gave, and estimated it's true value. It would seem that God gauges what we give by what we keep. The rich gave of their abundance or surplus - in other words they gave of their excess - there was no real sacrifice involved. It is sacrificial giving that really recruits the attention and blessing of the Lord. When last have you given to the point of painful yet joyful sacrifice?

5. THE POOR ARE NOT EXEMPT FROM GIVING

Mark 12:44 All the others gave what they'll never miss; she gave extravagantly what she couldn't afford--she gave her all." (Message Bible)

The Bible describes the widow in this story as 'poor'. The Greek word translated 'poor' = ptōchós, = to crouch, cower like a beggar; it describes someone who is poor and helpless - someone in abject poverty, utter helplessness, complete destitution.¹⁹⁶ This woman is biblical proof that you are never too poor not to afford to give. Poor people often use their poverty as a valid excuse not to give. Yet the opposite is true: your giving is your way out of poverty! The implication of this is that **NOBODY (RICH OR POOR) IS EXEMPT FROM GIVING.** Even the poor are expected to give to the Lord and to others. In **2 Corinthians 8:2**, Paul testifies of the Macedonian church, that they gave liberally with joy from their DEEP POVERTY.

2 Corinthians 8:1-5

- 1 Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia,
- 2 that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their DEEP POVERTY overflowed in the wealth of their liberality.
- 3 For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord,
- 4 begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints,
- 5 and this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God

The poor widow gave everything that she owned. She gave of all that she had to live on. This women was going home to nothing. Jesus draws the conclusion that the poor widow gave more than all of the rich people. Jesus stated that the one who gave the least by natural worldly standards, actually gave the most by the divine standard, because she had nothing left. Bear in mind that when God measures what you give, He looks at what

you retain for yourself. Bear in mind also, that no matter how much you give in terms of absolute amounts, it is God who determines the true value of your offerings, a value which may be vastly different from an earthly natural estimation.

HOW MUCH SHOULD I GIVE IN OFFERINGS TO THE LORD?

The Scriptures do speak to this question. The New Testament offers **four guiding principles as to how much we should give in offerings to the Lord.** Further guidelines are taught from other parts of the Scripture – these are explored in the second part of this series on Kingdom Economics.

PRINCIPLE 1 : WE GIVE IN DIRECT PROPORTION TO THE MEASURE THAT GOD HAS PROSPERED US

1 Corinthians 16:3 - KJV

- 1 "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even
- 2 Unto the first day of the week let every one of you lay be Him in store, <u>as God has prospered him</u>, that there be no gatherings when I come."

1 Corinthians 16:1 -NASB

- 1 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also.
- 2 On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, <u>as he may prosper</u>, so that no collections be made when I come.

Your giving should be reflective of your level of prosperity. How and what you give testifies to your level of blessing and abundance. To give an offering that is beneath your level of prosperity is dishonouring. Every

time we give, we are loudly proclaiming, "See how God has blessed me" (Thamo Naidoo). Not to give is to deny that God has blessed you. A level of giving that is less than your degree of material blessing is actually an insult to God, who has prospered you. To reiterate, the quality and quantity of your giving should directly be commensurate and in congruence with the degree of your material and financial prosperity.

A church in spiritual migration toward greater maturity will also progressively reflect a more abundant level of financial offerings.

PRINCIPLE 2 : GIVE ACCORDING TO YOUR ABILITY OR MEANS

Recall that David gave 'according to his ability'.

<u>1 Chron. 29:2</u> "Now with ALL MY ABILITY I have provided for the house of my God"

Carnal comparisons of amounts given between brothers in the Body of Christ are inappropriate and odious, since only God alone can accurately estimate the true value of an offering. He also expects us to give in proportion to how He has prospered us. In response to the economic disaster recorded in Acts 11, the disciples raised 'a contribution' – a relief fund for those worst affected.

Acts 11:28-30

28 One of them named Agabus stood up and began to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly <u>be a great</u> <u>famine all over the world</u>. And this took place in the reign of Claudius.

- 29 And **IN THE PROPORTION THAT ANY OF THE DISCIPLES HAD MEANS**, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea.
- 30 And this they did, sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders.

Note that each one gave in proportion to their **<u>MEANS.</u>** Some had greater means – and some lesser.

<u>2 Corinthians 8:3</u> For I testify that <u>according to their ability</u>, and <u>beyond their ability</u>, *they gave* of their <u>own</u> <u>accord</u>,

The Macedonian church gave according to what they were able to give.

PRINCIPLE 3: GIVE BEYOND YOUR ABILITY OR MEANS

The Macedonian church gave according to what they were able to give and <u>even beyond</u> what they were able to give. How does one give beyond what you are able to give. 'Beyond their ability' implies that serious sacrifices were made in order to give. This could imply that they inconvenienced themselves financially, placing the needs of Paul above their own.

Give offerings according to and beyond your means, affordability or ability.

Here is **<u>2 Cor. 8:3</u>** in various versions of the Bible:

- **<u>CEV</u>** They gave as **much as they could afford** and **even more**, simply because **they wanted to**.
- **ERV** I can tell you that they **gave as much as they were able** and **even more than they could afford**. No one told them to do this. **It was their idea.**
- **ESV** For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord,
- <u>YLT</u> because, according to *their* power, I testify, and above *their* power, they were willing of themselves,

PRINCIPLE 4 : GIVE THE AMOUNT THAT YOU DECIDE UPON IN YOUR HEART

2 Corinthians 9:6,7

- 6 Now this I say, he who <u>sows sparingly</u> will also <u>reap sparingly</u>, and he who <u>sows bountifully</u> will also <u>reap</u> <u>bountifully</u>.
- 7 Each one <u>must **DO AS HE HAS PURPOSED IN HIS HEART**</u>, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

To determine the tithe is easy – it is 10% of your gross earnings. God has left the amount of the offerings solely to the decision of the giver. Paul says that you must give as you have PURPOSED in your heart. But before he says this, he reminds us that the measure with which we sow will determine the measure with which we shall reap (2 Cor. 9:6). A practical example of this principle is ...

- ✓ If you sow in the hundreds, ...
- ✓ If you sow in the thousands, ...

✓ If you sow in the millions, ...

✓ If you sow in the tens of thousands, ...

✓ If you sow in the hundreds of thousands, ...

- you will reap in the hundreds.
- you will reap in the thousands.
- you will reap in the tens of thousands.
- you will reap in the hundreds of thousands.
- you will reap in the millions.

✓ Etc.

PRINCIPLE 5: GIVE BASED ON PROPHETIC INSIGHT AND UNDERSTANDING

Financial giving to God's Kingdom is one of the most powerful expressions of spiritual warfare. A lifestyle of giving is an act of spiritual warfare and has far reaching prophetic implications for one's future. This principle is addressed and demonstrated in the second part in this series on Kingdom Economics. A deep understanding of what financial giving represents in the spirit realm will influence the quantity and quality of one's giving.

To summarise, ...

THE AMOUNT WE DECIDE TO GIVE IN OUR HEARTS MUST BE IN DIRECT PROPORTION TO THE LEVEL OF OUR FINANCIAL AND MATERIAL PROSPERITY, OUR AFFORDABILITY, BEYOND OUR AFFORDABILITY AND BE A REFLECTION OF OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROPHETIC NATURE OF GIVING.

Remember the words of our Lord Jesus Christ:

"It is more blessed to give than to receive"

Acts 20:35

BBE	There is a greater blessing in giving than in getting.
CEV	More blessings come from giving than from receiving.
ERV	You will have a greater blessing when you give than when you receive.
GW	Giving gifts is more satisfying than receiving them
MSG	You're far happier giving than getting
AMP	It is more blessed (makes one happier and more to be envied) to give than to receive

Profuse blessing and great grace be yours as you give!

Summation of 'Offerings' Principles

- 1. Offerings are given; tithes are returned.
- 2. God's people rob Him by not giving Him offerings and not returning to Him tithes.
- 3. Offerings are key to accessing the blessings of increase; tithes withhold the 'devourer'.
- 4. Give offerings according to your means, affordability or ability.
- 5. Give offerings beyond your means, affordability or ability.
- 6. Making serious financial sacrifices and inconveniencing oneself personally to give more offerings is commendable before God.
- 7. Sacrificial giving recruits the attention and blessing of the Lord.
- 8. Give offerings in proportion to how God has prospered you.
- 9. The quality and quantity of your giving should directly be commensurate and in congruence with the degree of your material and financial prosperity.
- 10. The amount of offerings you give must be decided in your heart.
- 11. Offerings express giving that flows spontaneously, expressing devotion to the Lord. It is not a gift out of a sense of duty, nor to secure promised blessings.
- 12. Every vision from the Lord will attract to itself people who will finance and resource the needs of the vision.
- 13. The giving of offerings for Kingdom projects is described as the <u>LORD'S CONTRIBUTION</u>.
- 14. It is important that people see their financial contributions toward a specific God-ordained vision as being given unto the Lord Himself, although human vessels receive and administrate this.
- 15. Offerings, symbolically and prophetically, picture a greater spiritual furnishing and spiritual authority that God will bring to His corporate house.
- 16. Offerings are given based on the stirring of one's heart and the moving in one's spirit.
- 17. Offerings must be done willingly, generously and promptly.
- 18. Leaders should demonstrate public giving before their people, even detailing the specific amounts of their personal contributions to set an example to them. Demonstration of a spiritual principle is more powerful in its impartational quality than the articulation of the principle.
- 19. Your offerings reflect your passion and priority for God's plans and purposes attendant in and transmitted through His House.

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- 20. As God's people 'delight' in the House of the Lord, their giving of offerings, biblically, is God's way of settling any associated debt.
- 21. As we migrate prophetically from Moses' Tabernacle to Solomon's Temple, offerings should increase dramatically.
- 22. Your personal financial giving to God and His Kingdom should grow commensurately with your maturity in God.
- 23. A church in spiritual migration toward greater maturity will also progressively reflect a more abundant level of financial offerings.
- 24. The character of your giving, both in quantity and in quality, will reflect the opinion you have of God.
- 25. God wants the best part of your finances.
- 26. HOW we give is just as important as how much we give.
- 27. The true value of a financial offering is not so much determined by the absolute amount given, but by the spirit in which it is given.
- 28. In His capacity as a Judge, God is bringing reformation, refinement and re-alignment to financial practices in the church and is thoroughly appraising accuracy, attitude and obedience in the area of financial giving and financial stewardship.
- 29. All of our giving is recorded by the Lord His record may be vastly different from an earthly record.
- 30. The poor are not exempt from sacrificial giving.
- 31. No matter how much you give in terms of absolute amounts, it is God who determines the true value of your offerings, a value which may be vastly different from an earth-based estimation.
- 32. A lifestyle of giving is an act of spiritual warfare and has far reaching prophetic implications for one's future.
- 33. The blessing attendant with financial giving by far outweighs the blessedness of receiving financial gifts.

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'And Offerings'

Questions and Issues for Personal Review and Group Discussion

- Three incidences of lavish offerings in Scripture took place for the following projects: the building of Moses' Tabernacle, the construction of Solomon's Temple and the dedication of Solomon's Temple. These represent three case studies of willing and abundant giving. Analyse each example, seeking to draw inferences relative to our present day giving of offerings for specific Kingdom purposes.
- 2. Does God conduct a penetrative scrutiny into the quantity of our giving, i.e. is He seriously concerned about the amounts given?
- 3. How does God evaluate what we give as offerings?
- 4. The spirit of poverty seeks to entrap people financially and instills a mentality of enslavement that sometimes manifests in a justification not to give financial offerings to a church or servant of God. Provide two biblical case studies to support the view that the poor are not exempt from giving.
- 5. Determining one's tithe is a matter of a mathematical calculation of 10% of one's gross earnings. First fruits are determined by whatever comes in first. What guidelines exist in Scripture that would assist us in determining the level of our offerings?

Personal Notes on 'God's Kingdom Economy'				

Cndnotes

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Randolph Barnwell's primary grace is that of teaching with an apostolic-prophetic emphasis. He is focused on the development of various resources which capture and document eternal, unaltering principles for effective functioning in life so that divine personal and corporate destiny can be swiftly accomplished. To this end, he writes study manuals, books, records audio teachings in series format and produces musical products.

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- ✤ Hebronic Relationships
- ✤ Divine Love
- ✤ Obedience
- ✤ The Glory of God
- * Divine Leadership Principles
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- * Pristine Personal Purity
- * Enlargement : Moving into Broad Places
- * Understanding Prophetic Ministry

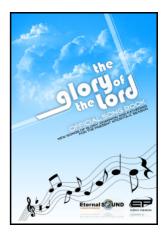
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If you wish to be placed on our mailing list – so that you will informed as to new manuals, then make this request to <u>info@eternalsound.co.za</u>.

MUSIC RESOURCES AVAILABLE

The GLORY OF THE LORD Praise and Worship CD and Accompanying SONGBOOK





Produced by highly acclaimed producer, Riaan Pretorious. The songs contained in this CD and songbook were recorded in Durban, South Africa in October 2008. This recording is the realization of many prophetic words given to us in reference praise and worship recordings. All the songs are original and were written by people within Eternal Sound or those closely associated with the ministry. The songs were borne out of a desire to capture the present truth emphasis in the current season, which some have labeled, 'the Apostolic Season'. Some songs originated out of prophetic singing, i.e. the Song of the Lord or 'spiritual songs', or as a result to capture musically a particular truth or principle of the Word of God as it was revealed personally to the songwriters or through a sermon or teaching. The overriding theme of this group of songs is a deep seated cry to see the manifestation of the Glory of God within each of His sons as we journey toward maturity in God. It is in this way that the knowledge of the Glory of God will cover the earth, which belongs to the Lord, and hence to us, to steward and rule on His behalf. Expressing our stewardship of the earth and God's eternal purposes necessitates us coming into our preordained dominion and governance mandate originally given to man. We are called as Kings to rule and govern as exact representations of God, as we reconcile all things back to Christ. A secondary theme is that of Fathering and Sonship captured in songs like 'Brand New Day', 'Father in Me' and 'We Honour You'. May these serve to facilitate and consolidate this emphasis of the Lord in the Kingdom of God today, as he 'turns the hearts of fathers to sons and the hearts of sons to fathers (Malachi 4:5-6). The Father-Son dimension is critical component of restoration that will neutralize any prevailing curse, activate the release of the fullness of God's glory and facilitate our function as rulers over the earth. This songbook also contains the scriptural foundation of each song. Our firm conviction is that the Word of God must be the basis for all singing according to Colossians 3:16, which says, "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God." Included in this Songbook also is a helpful classification table which categories the songs in terms of tempo, and key. This will assist singers and musicians to easily identify particular songs by these criteria or group them in arranging medley options.

These songs and the Songbook in PDF format are FREELY DOWNLOADABLE from <u>www.eternalsound.co.za</u> and <u>www.randolphbarnwell.com</u>. Email requests for the Songbook may also be sent to <u>randolph@eternalsoundco.za</u>.

Actual CD's and hard copies of the songbook may be ordered through <u>info@eternalsound.co.za</u> – these are reasonably priced simply to recover production and mailing costs.

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'SHOUTS OF GRACE GRACE' Praise and Worship CD and Accompanying SONGBOOK





The 'Shouts of Grace, Grace' album celebrates the grace of God, as the key to our salvation as well as to our capacity to execute the purposes of God successfully. Paul said, 'I am what I am by grace; I work, yet not I but grace that is with me' (1 Cor. 15:10). Grace made him who he was and grace caused him to labour diligently and function effectively to fulfill the divine mandate over his life.

God's grace refers to both His unmerited and merited favour, enablement and empowerment. Grace introduces one to life in the kingdom of God, and growth in grace is essential to accomplish the assignment of God over your life. The impartation of and therefore growth in grace occurs through many mediums, e.g. the Word of God, submission and obedience to the spiritual fathering, humility, wisdom, financial offerings to spiritual fathers, etc. Some of these principles are highlighted in the songs on this CD. Many songs highlight 'Table of the Lord' or 'Breaking of Bread' as a pivotal key for accessing grace for long life, strength, healing and every other benefit afforded to us through the death of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. At the bottom of the CD cover is an abstract artistic depiction of the 'last supper' where Jesus broke bread with His disciples.

As this age culminates, and the purposes of God climax, God is releasing shouts of the double grace – 'Grace, Grace' intended to obliterate every mountainous obstacle that opposes the swift execution of His will, and also to finalize and resolve specific aspects of His global intent. These sentiments, expressed in many of the songs, are encapsulated in Zechariah 4:6,7

Zechariah 4: 6,7Then he said to me, "This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel saying, 'Not by might nor by
power, but by My Spirit,' says the Lord of hosts. 'What are you, O great mountain? Before
Zerubbabel you will become a plain; and he will bring forth the top stone with shouts of
"Grace, grace to it!

Our prayer is that grace would be multiplied to you as you listen to and engage God through these songs. Divine Shouts of Grace, Grace to you!

These songs and the Songbook in PDF format are FREELY DOWNLOADABLE from <u>www.eternalsound.co.za</u> and <u>www.randolphbarnwell.com</u>. Email requests for the Songbook may also be sent to <u>randolph@eternalsoundco.za</u>.

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MORE EXCELLENT GIVING

This study manual, 'More Excellent Giving', sets forth clear biblical principles that should govern financial giving in the Kingdom of God.

The Kingdom God, financially, is driven by the principles of giving and receiving. One of the core aspects of the nature of God is that He is a giver, and this essential attribute within His character must be fully embraced and expressed within each son of God. Opportunities to accurately dispense and distribute kingdom finances provide the ideal context in which we can demonstrate the effortless giving disposition of our generous God. Three dimensions of giving, viz. first fruits, tithes and offerings, are explained with solid biblical substantiation. It also demonstrated how financial attitudes and fiscal behaviour affect spiritual destiny significantly. This reading will bring economic reformation to your financial world and position you in a life of blessedness promised by God.



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