

Connection

When have you experienced the truth of the saying "It is more of a blessing to give than to receive?"

Content

Money can be a trap. Focusing on getting and keeping it makes a person discontent, jealous and greedy. There's no joy in that.

Instead, let's look at money as an opportunity for spiritual growth and joy through giving.

Giving and the Path to Growth

Jesus talked a lot about money. Read Matthew 6:19-24. Jesus says to store treasures in heaven, not on earth, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." And, "You cannot serve both God and money."

1. How would you describe the meaning of "serving money," in the way Jesus was talking? And, how could you stop doing that?

Old Testament Perspective

Read Proverbs 3:9-10. In the Old Testament, God set down the law and established a way to live that brings physical and spiritual health. When it came to money, God instituted the tithe, a pattern for giving him a significant share of our "first fruits."

2. What do you think are some good ways to "honor the Lord with your wealth" like Proverbs says to do?

The Legal Limit

Read Jeremiah 31: 31-34. In Old Testament times, it was impossible to obey all of God's laws all the time, including those about money. God had to provide a way of temporary atonement, of being redeemed from failure to keep the law. The prophets foretold a Messiah who would atone once and for all. They said God would put his law in people's minds "and write it on their hearts." And God would forgive and forget their sins for good.

3. What could you tell someone who says they think believing in Jesus is like trying to obey a list of things you can and cannot do?

A Relationship, Not a Religion

Read 2 Corinthians 3:3. Jesus is that foretold Messiah. For those who believe in him, God's law is not etched on stone tablets like the Old Testament law, but "on tablets of human hearts."

4. Read Jeremiah 17:19. God says, "the heart is deceitful." What difference does it make for you if your heart has been transformed by trusting Jesus?

Cheerful Generosity

Read 2 Corinthians 9:5-13. When it comes to our money, giving isn't a matter of following an Old Testament rule. In Jesus, what you should give is "decided in your heart." God says to trust Him for what happens after that.

5. Ask yourself, "Am I giving the best of what I have, the first fruits?" And if not, ask, "How is my heart not aligned with God?"

"For God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work." Yes, giving is a ministry that gives you a part to play in the church community.

6. Based on the verses here in 2 Corinthians, what is it about giving that nurtures spiritual growth?

Commitment

God always has more for you. When you trust him with everything, including your money, your trust in Him grows. Ask God to lead you to be cheerfully generous.

What is one step God is challenging you to take to trust Him more in your giving?

Will you take that step today? ___ yes ___ no