

“WHO do you follow ~ GENEROSITY” 1.29.12

Anne Frank was a Jewish teenager **living in Nazi Germany** during the Holocaust. For her **13th birthday** she received a **diary** as a present. **1 month later she & her family** were forced into hiding for 25 months for fear of the Nazi's.

Aug 1944 she & her family were **betrayed-deported** to Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. For 2 ½ yrs. she wrote in her diary of the horrific events in those desperate times.

Anne Frank never lost faith in humanity despite the **hate & violence** all around her.
@ Age 15 Anne died of typhus.

Anne Frank had **unusual insight & compassion** for any person her age.
Anne Frank once wrote, **“No one has ever become poor by giving.”**

Remarkable perspective in the midst of suffering – SO WHAT TRUTH
did she understand about this life that often is hidden or missed by so many in our culture?

The Bible validates this idea that “no one has ever become poor by giving”.
Proverbs 11: 24,
“Give freely & become more wealthy; be stingy & lose everything.”

I believe as a church culture]

WE NEED to be reminded just how wealthy ~ just how blessed we are on multiple levels:

I. **We are** the most blessed - prosperous people in the history of Christendom

A. **SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS** ~ *matters of 1st importance!*

GOD HAS GIVEN US:

1. **His Holy Spirit** to dwell w-in us + **[His church]** to encourage us.
2. **His Holy Word** to guide us + Anytime you speak, God listens.
3. **God will never let you be tempted too much_or stumble too far.**
4. Let a tear appear on your cheek & **God is there to wipe it away.**
5. We've been delivered from the power of darkness (Colossians 1:13)

6. **We are Justified** by his grace (Titus 3:7)

7. We've been redeemed from the curse of the law (Galatians 3:13)
8. **Washed** from our sins in His own blood (Revelation 7:15)

9. **Isaiah 40:29-31**²⁹ He gives power to the weak and strength to the powerless. ³¹ But those who trust in the LORD will find new strength. ***They will soar high on wings like eagles.*** They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.
10. **Romans 8:37-3**³⁷ No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. ³⁸ And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow, ***not even the powers of hell*** can separate us from God's love. ³⁹ No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

B. FAMILY BLESSINGS ~ after Jesus no one compares to our family!

1. (R) Psalm 127: 3 – 5 & Psalm 128: 1 – 4 + 6 or p. 473 in pew Bible
2. **How much are your children worth? Your wife? Your husband? Your parents & siblings?**

C. MATERIAL BLESSINGS

1. **READ Psalm 24: 1-2 [Simple Biblical Principle]**
you will struggle with stuff until you understand this idea!
2. Most of us **have no clue** how wealthy we really are:
BRACE YOURSELF for this good news!
 - a. If your **income is \$25k per year** you are wealthier than 90% of the world's population.
 - b. If you make **\$50k per year**, you are wealthier than 99% of the world's population.
 - c. Remember, of **the 6.7 billion people** on planet earth, almost ½ of them live on less than \$2 per day.

3. 1999 US Census for Hamilton County found that the **median income per household was 71k** & less than 2.9% live below the poverty line.

4. **IF you don't feel rich-materially blessed** it's because you are comparing yourself to people who have more than you do; those **who are living above even the 99%** of global wealth.
 - a. It's also because we gauge whether or not we are wealthy based on the things we don't have =
 - b. Bigger house or nicer car or the ability to go out for dinner more often = **wealth is relative to our experience.**

5. When you realize that 93% of the world's population doesn't own a car, your old clunker starts to look pretty good. We don't believe we are wealthy, so we don't embrace our responsibility to care for others.

6. Simply stated, we are the wealthiest community of Christians in the history of Christendom. **How wealthy?**
 - a. The total income of American church-goers is **5.2 Trillion = more than 5,000 BILLION DOLLARS**
 - b. It would take just a little over (1) percent of the income of American Christian to lift the poorest (1) billion people out of extreme poverty.
 - c. **WE ARE SO BLESSED** ~ money's not our problem! Financially God has blessed us beyond all measure.

NOT meant to make you feel guilty;
BUT to remind each of us of our great responsibility.

Jesus specific expectations for us are given in, Luke 12: 48b,
*"From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded;
 & from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked."*

Let's GET REAL & talk about God's chief competition for our loyalties:

God recognized early on that **HIS CHIEF COMPETITOR** for our totally dependence upon Him = **is our money.**

1. **PLEASE KNOW Money is not viewed by God** as a neutral or benign issue.
2. **MONEY is POWER** and power competes with God for supremacy in our lives.
3. Jesus recognized this very thing as He preached the **Sermon on the Mount**:

Matthew 6: 24

“No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other, you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God & money.”

4. **Jesus recognized that we will be a slave to one or the other but not to both.**

A major reason we give is because it helps keep my ♥ in check

Bible says,

“Above all else, guard your ♥, for it is the wellspring of life.” [Proverbs 4: 23]

Our Lord Jesus did not hesitate to discuss money.

In fact the Bible devotes twice as many verses to money as it does to,

FAITH & PRAYER = COMBINED.

15% of Jesus’ recorded words dealt w-money,

more than Jesus spoke about: **HEAVEN & HELL = COMBINED.**

Jesus devoted so much attention to money & possessions because,
He understood these tangible items are **an indicator** of our spiritual condition:

Jesus said,

*“For where your treasure is, there **your heart** will be also.” [Luke 12:34]*

One of the **great principles in Scriptures**
that is intended to monitor our relationship to our material goods, is the TITHE.

According to the **Book of Leviticus**, the **1st ten percent**
of our income is to be offered to God:

“1/10th of the produce of the land, whether grain from the fields or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord and must be set apart to Him as holy.” [27:30]

The **TITHE** was not considered a gift to God ~ **it belonged to God.**

There were other provisions that spoke to Freewill - Giving,
but any such offerings **were to be over and above the (10 %)** required by the **TITHE**.

It's important to establish what God expects from us in scripture, when it comes to giving:

What are His biblical instructions?

II. **SO WHAT are God's instructions, on giving?**

A. If we look @ **God's Design for Giving = it starts with the TITHE.**

1. Some have come to believe, the **TITHE** is no longer applicable today,
it's an O.T. principle but the Bible never says that.
2. [In fact] nowhere in the N.T. does it indicate that tithing is no longer valid;
with a single statement, God could have easily singled out tithing
like He did sacrifices & the Sabbath, **but God did not do that.**
 - (R) **Matthew 23: 23 – 24** or p. 754 in pew Bible
 - **JESUS SAID= "...you should tithe, yes"**
 - **Jesus used** the idea of TITHING because **it is a time-less biblical principle;**

Jesus is very specific about giving in Matthew 22: 21,
"...give to God what belongs to God."

God instituted the TITHE to underscore our total dependence upon Him.

Richard Foster says, "Just the very act of letting go of money, or some other treasure, does something within us. **It destroys the demon greed."**

III. **STRAIGHT – UP CHALLENGE TODAY**

- A. **MAKE 2012 the year you step out on faith & begin TRUSTING GOD with all of your time + treasures + talents!**
- B. (R) **Matthew 6: 24 – 34** or p. 737 in pew Bible
- C. [INSERT] parable from the old Kingston Trio
- D. **Practical Questions Concerning Tithing**

If you are served well by the waiter or waitress at the restaurant-he pays extra attention to your table and is especially courteous- what would you consider to be a generous tip? That depends on two things: the amount of the bill and the standard of generosity. Three dollars would be considered a generous tip if the bill came to ten dollars. But three dollars would be miserly if the bill came to forty dollars, because the acceptable standard for tipping is 15% percent. A generous tip for a meal would be more than 15 percent of the bill.

Most of us have blessed extravagantly –with good health, loved ones, good jobs, and nice houses. We have the spiritual blessings of salvation, the church, the Holy Spirit, forgiveness of sins + the promise of eternal life. After all that God has given to us, can we be satisfied giving 3 or 4 percent of our income to **the ONE we owe everything?**

That may seem radical to many Christians, but I’ve learned that there are two kinds of givers: those who give by reason & those who give by revelation. If you give by reason, you calculate how much you will give by how much you can afford to give. If you give by revelation, you say, “How much does God expect me to give?” and then trust God to provide the rest.

I heard about a bumper sticker that said,
“TITHE IF YOU LOVE JESUS ~ ANYBODY CAN HONK.”

Some simple steps would be:

1. **PRAY & COMMIT** to Giving Back to God @ least 10% of annual income
2. **ENROLL** in ‘**FINANCIAL BOOT-CAMP**’ = **game-changer!**
begins next Thursday night Feb 2nd @ 6:30 p.m.