

Our Response to God's Goodness

I. Believer's Response to the Goodness of God

- a. **Comprehend** some of the transforming truths of your stewardship responsibilities before El Shaddai.
 1. **Freely** have you received all that you have; freely give as the Holy Spirit directs.
 2. With our **possessions** we are to glorify God.
 3. The pursuit of earthly riches is **deceitful**.
 4. This life is the only preparation for **eternity** available to us. Therefore we need to invest it well.
 5. Our **affections** must be on things above, not on things of the earth.
 6. The Holy Spirit has placed us in the body as it pleased Him so that we would **participate** in its stewardship function.

II. God's Design For Stewardship Within the Body

- a. All church leaders are first, under Christ's authority and headship, and therefore **accountable** to Him. Matt 16:18 *And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. KJV*
- b. Pastors, as leaders of the local church, should never be autonomous. **Elders** have been ordained to assist in the ministry and to provide a source of accountability for the pastor. Titus 1:5-6 *The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. 6 An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. NIV*
- c. The biblical pattern of leadership is that the appointed or anointed ones are responsible for comprehending God's **vision** and for taking the appropriate steps in leading the flock of God to bring those purposes to pass.
- d. For example, God designated Moses to lead Israel to the Promised Land in order to accomplish His eternal purposes, purposes, which were a **mystery** to Israel and which would not become evident for centuries into the future. 1 Cor 2:7 *But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: KJV*
- e. Like all true visions imparted by God, the vision entrusted to Moses did not focus upon **satisfying** people's selfish desires but upon His own eternal purposes of reconciling the world to its Creator and establishing His Kingdom on earth.
- f. The vision entrusted to the leader is not a simple matter of God paving the way to do what comes naturally or easily to the leader. God's vision may appear difficult or even **impossible** to achieve, requiring faith, hard work, persistence and perseverance. Num 13:26-29 *And they went and came to Moses, and to Aaron, and to all the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the wilderness of Paran, to Kadesh; and brought back word unto them, and unto all the congregation, and shewed them the fruit of the land. 27 And they told him, and said, We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it. 28 Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there. 29 The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south: and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites, dwell in the mountains: and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan. KJV*
- g. Such is the ministry of the church today: We are to accomplish all that God has **foreordained** among every tribe and tongue and nation until all that He has purposed comes to pass. It is His work and we are His laborers. Eph 2:10 *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. KJV*

III. The Vision of Our Church "Our buildings, like our hearts, need to reflect the transforming power of God." Pastor Rich

- a. The Victory goal \$3,700,000 (How much can I **afford** to give?)
 - Satisfy Crosspointe pledge
 - Enlarge foyer
 - Phase I deferred maintenance
- b. The Challenge goal \$900,000 (Prompted by the Holy Spirit, how much will I give of my **available** assets?)
 - Signage
 - Phase II deferred maintenance
 - Phase I worship center renovation
- c. The Miracle goal \$900,000 (If prompted by the Holy Spirit to give **sacrificially**, what would I give?)
 - Complete worship center renovation
 - Phase III deferred maintenance

IV. Stewardship Actions & Attitudes for Those Under Authority

- a. Since we believe that God has called and chosen our leaders, we as believers should have an attitude of respect and the inclination to **follow** them. Heb 13:17 *Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you. NIV*
- b. Following should be active--**not passive**. We should seek to find ways to help them succeed in accomplishing the vision that God has laid out for them for the work of the ministry as if we are serving the Lord. Col 3:23-24 *Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, 24 since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. NIV*
- c. Should we disagree with the vision of our leadership, remember that the burden of proof is on those under authority to justify why they should not follow, not vice-versa. God has appointed leaders **to lead**. Num 12:5-8 *Then the LORD came down in a pillar of cloud; he stood at the entrance to the Tent and summoned Aaron and Miriam. When both of them stepped forward, 6 he said, "Listen to my words: "When a prophet of the LORD is among you, I reveal myself to him in visions, I speak to him in dreams. 7 But this is not true of my servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house. 8 With him I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles; he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?" NIV*
- d. We can and should ask questions, make suggestions, and even raise objections, respectfully. Once, the decision is reached and if it is not unbiblical, then we should support our leaders as if they are under the leadership of the **Lord Himself**.

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V. Stewardship and Our Sanctification

- a. Our ultimate earthly purpose is to glorify God. This can only be accomplished when we are spiritually responsive to the will and purposes of God in every moment of time. Experience demonstrates to us that this is a continual **battle**. Rom 7:23 *But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. KJV*
- b. C.S. Lewis put the struggle in this way: "Every square inch, every split second is claimed by God and **counterclaimed** by Satan"
- c. There are no neutral zones, there are no times during which the battle is held in abeyance, there is no retreat from it and there can be no sanctuary. Deliverance from this battle can only occur at our **death** or bodily resurrection. 1 Cor 15:52 *For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. NIV*
- d. Therefore, in **every** moment we are either glorifying God or we are:
 1. **Quenching** the Spirit with our attitudes or, 1 Thess 5:19-21 *Do not put out the Spirit's fire; 20 do not treat prophecies with contempt. NIV*
 2. **Grieving** the Spirit by our overt disobedience Eph 4:30-31 *and do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. NIV*
- e. One of the most difficult areas within our sinful natures with which the Spirit must deal is the profound and intransigent attitudes and beliefs we hold about: **MY** money and **MY** possessions. Matt 6:24 *"No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money. NIV*

VI. Barriers to Our Giving

- a. Our **Circumstances**
 1. Believers often fall into the trap in which they believe that circumstances should **dictate** and direct ones response rather than doing what the Holy Spirit is prompting them to do. 1 Sam 15:14-15 *And Samuel said, What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear? 15 And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed. KJV*
 2. This has the effect of our imposing a **limit** upon God. We often forget that God places us in situations which require faith to overcome and that what appears to be our limiting circumstance poses no real barrier to our Great God.
 3. In addition, circumstance is often nothing more than a convenient excuse that we use because our objection to giving is really rooted at a deeper level...in the **heart**. Matt 15:19 *For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: KJV*
- b. Our **Attitudes**
 1. Attitudes are a reflection of what is true in ones' heart. They are more subtle but more compelling than circumstance in terms of their power to shape our **behavior**
 2. Attitudes are shaped over time and reflect what we **really** believe about a person or circumstance. Attitudes emanating from the carnal nature of the believer are anti-God and not subject to the laws of faith. Rom 8:7 *Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. KJV*
 3. While we may **suppress** attitudes for a brief period of time, the only lasting antidote to carnal attitudes about giving is transformation by the Spirit of God. This is accomplished through the process of sanctification.
 4. Until or unless the Holy Spirit deals with one's attitudes about giving, the giving that we do is accomplished in and through the flesh and is not **acceptable** to God. Acts 5:3-4 *But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? 4 Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.*
 5. In the process of our sanctification, as these issues are being overcome by the Spirit, we are not left **powerless**, with no ability to respond to the prompting of the Holy Spirit.
 - a. We can be **conscious** of both our circumstance and our attitudes about our money and possessions.
 - b. We can **acknowledge** when we recognize attitudes and behavior that are inconsistent with the goodness of God.
 - c. We can **agree** with God that these attitudes and behaviors are sinful in and of themselves and that we really have no excuse for allowing ourselves to be ruled by them.
 - d. We can ask God to help us avail ourselves of the **grace** that He continually provides to overcome our sin that we might be image bearers of El Shaddai as we live our lives before His face and before others.

VII. Self Evaluation

- a. To what extent do I find myself in personal circumstance that would preclude me from responding to the prompting of the Holy Spirit in this matter of giving?
- b. To what extent do I see within myself sinful attitudes towards **my money** and **my possessions** that could cause me to not respond to the prompting of the Holy Spirit in this matter of giving?
- c. To what extent am I willing to trust El Shaddai to overcome my circumstance and my attitudes in order to use me as a conduit through which He intends to reach the vision that He has given our church leadership?
- d. To what extent do you believe that God is able to take **whatever** you give and make a higher and better use of it than you would if you kept it for yourself?