

“This is why I remind you to fan into flames the spiritual gift God gave you when I laid my hands on you.”

(2 Timothy 1:6, NLT)

You and I are called to constantly “*stir up*” (NKJV) the embers and fuel the fire so we will remain a blazing inferno for Jesus

If we are going to see the results the early Church in the book of Acts experienced we must be...

People of the Word – Steadfast in Prayer

Embrace the Movement of the Holy Spirit

We Must Burn for Souls

Burning with Praise and Worship

Burning for Holiness – Burning for Humility

Burning under Authority

*“Can two walk together, unless they are **agreed?**”*

(Amos 3:3, NKJV)

Agree or Agreement – “*a coming together to produce a blended sound*” – Eng. Word, Symphony

- It is where we get our English word for symphony

The biblical meaning to this word is having a cooperative attitude and learning to “*play*” one’s part

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.” **(John 13:20, NKJV)**

To live with a fresh fire in your life you have got to come under the spiritual authority that God has established for your life

Burning with Generosity

It is important to note that generosity spans the gamut of stewardship over our entire lives

- Including the resources of our time, money, and our energies
- We are going to focus primarily on financial giving

There are an abundance of commands in scripture concerning the Lord's requirements in this area of our lives

I realize that some people cringe at the mention of money

- What we do with our money is a great revealer of our spiritual condition
- A heart that is full of fresh fire and a passion for God and His purposes is a generous heart

How generous we are with our finances in the furtherance of God's Kingdom is a revealer of how on fire we are for Him and how in love we are with Him

“You can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving.” – Amy Carmichael, (Songwriter)

“A religion that gives nothing, costs nothing, and suffers nothing, is worth nothing” – Martin Luther

I find it interesting that many people only get upset about the mention of money when it comes to generous giving in the Church or a Christian context

Yet the truth is that everywhere you go, someone is going to talk to you about money

For example:

- When you go to the grocery store to fill your cart with the items you need to take home, the cashier asks you for money
- When you go to the symphony, to a musical performance, or to the theater to see an exciting new movie, before you are issued a ticket, the cashier asks you for money
- When you go to your favorite restaurant to enjoy a great meal, the server always ends the experience by asking you for money to pay for what you have eaten
- Money, money, money — everywhere you go, people are asking you for money!

“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

(Matthew 6:21, NKJV)

- Jesus’ teaching is quite clear
- What a person does with their money reveals what’s on the inside of their heart

You may say you love the Lord

If you don’t give the way the Lord commands what does that say about you?

If we don't give the way the Word of God teaches us we are either ignorant about giving, afraid to trust Him, or we don't truly love the Lord with all of our heart, soul, and strength

- Words are cheap and easily spoken
- If a person loves the Lord what he does with money will reflect that deep love for Him

When a person gives sacrificially as the Lord asks of him, that person is demonstrating that his words of love for God are authentic

Giving to the Lord is not about the amount it's about the sacrifice – *Luke 21:1-4 (Widows two mites)*

- It's about giving in proportion to your means
- When a person doesn't have much but gives sacrificially God sees that as generous

But, if a person has money and doesn't give or doesn't give sacrificially according to their income the Lord sees that his words and actions don't match

When we spend extra money on all kinds of material things and then drop a few dollars in the offering, our actions reveal that we love our possessions and our pursuits more than we love the Lord and His Church

Think of the man who tells his wife he loves her but never gives her any money or special gifts, yet finds money to fish, hunt, or go to events he enjoys

- Then tells his wife they have no money to do the things she enjoys
- The husband's actions reveal without a spoken word that he loves himself more than he loves his wife
- If you want to know where your heart is follow your money
- Money really does tell the truth

Generosity flowed in Jesus' ministry

“how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.”

(Acts 10:38, NKJV)

- Yes, Jesus healed and delivered people He came in contact with
- He also went about doing good
- *Doing good – “a benefactor or philanthropist”*
- *“One who financially supports charitable works and meets the needs of disadvantaged people”*
- We know that Jesus performed supernatural miracles of provision – **John 6:1-3 (loaves and fishes)**
- He also provided natural, material help to people who were in need

Jesus' ministry possessed enormous financial resources

He had financial supporters and a treasurer

“and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities—Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who provided for Him from their substance.” (Luke 8:2–3, NKJV)

“Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?” (John 12:5, NKJV)

- We can infer because of Judas' words that Jesus' ministry had an outreach to the poor

Every year we donate more than 12% of our income to missionaries and organizations outside of our 4 walls

Because of you we have been able to preach the Gospel to tens of thousands around the world, fund disaster relief, feed the hungry, help young girls caught in sex trafficking, and help those considering abortion find alternative solutions

- We currently support 15 Missionaries and organizations globally, monthly
- Over the past nine years, we have given upwards of \$94,000 in local outreach and \$200,000 globally

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.” (Hebrews 13:8, NKJV)

- Jesus was and still is generous today!

God is a giving, generous God, and wherever He is working in people's hearts, their hearts burn with a desire to give

Every person who desires to be like Him begins to flow in a spirit of generosity

“Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.” (Acts 2:44–45, NKJV)

When hearts come alive with the fresh fire of God, one manifestation of that divine fire is the desire to open up wallets and purses

- Stingy hearts are closed hearts
- Open hearts are generous
- This is what we see in the Early Church
- It's what God still expects today!

“And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.” (Acts 4:33–35, NKJV)

- When people began to be generous with God and each other, God became generous to them
- Signs and wonders erupted
- Generosity ignited a cycle of blessing and power

God moved; the people gave, and then God generously distributed demonstrations of His power to confirm the truth of Christ's resurrection through great signs and wonders

- God is generous with those who are generous

When we freely give from our substance, He responds by giving from the fullness of who He is and by moving mightily in our midst

- The early Church was so on fire for God they held nothing back!
- Not even their possessions
- They came ablaze with a passion for giving
- The more they gave the more spiritual logs they threw on their spiritual fire
- That spiritual inferno spread throughout the known world

Never forget that God is generous with the generous!

God will be merciful with the tightfisted, but He is generous and manifests His liberality in grand and glorious ways to those who open their hearts, hands, and wallets to the Lord!

“Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.” (Luke 6:38, NKJV)

- If you have a generous heart and give accordingly, God will be generous with you
- It also means if you are stingy in your heart and your giving what you receive will be dramatically less

“But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.”

(2 Corinthians 9:6, NKJV)

- Could it be any clearer?
- If we are stingy we receive stingy results
- If we are generous we receive bountiful results
- If we are stingy with God we will reap a stingy harvest

Let me use the example of the Dead Sea

- It is dead because life flows into it, but there is no outlet for water to flow out of it
- It is the Dead Sea because it continually receives and never gives

Scientists say if an outlet was formed for the Dead Sea to flow through, its waters could teem with life — but because this body of water has no outlet for water to flow through, it has become the Dead Sea

- The Dead Sea is like many Christians — they receive, but they’re not conduits through whom generosity flows to others
- They invest in themselves; they spend on themselves or their families

But because they don’t allow the same generosity to flow through their lives to bless others or the work of the ministry, they eventually lose their spiritual vitality

- This is not how God fashioned Christians to exist
- This type of selfishness will eventually cause any Christian to experience the loss of divine passion and fresh fire

You see this principle from the very beginning of time
God asks His people to give with serious and thoughtful intent
In the Old Testament people sometimes had to prepare for days
or even weeks to bring a sacrifice to God

- There were specific requirements on how to build an altar
- There were specifics on how they were to present it on the altar
- Once the altar was built, wood for the fire had to be gathered
- Last but not least, an animal had to be selected for the sacrifice
- It could not be just any animal
- It had to be without spot, without blemish
- Time, care, thoughtfulness, effort, planning
- None of it was last minute or happenstance
- Great preparation went into the act of giving an offering to God
- God wanted people to take their giving seriously
- A moment that they thought about and put effort into
- Their giving cost them something
- Time, effort, and resources

Once a person had gathered the stones to build the altar and prepared the offering, they offered it

- They simultaneously called on the Name of the Lord
- They called on Him and asked them to help and get involved in their lives

They were generous with their gifts because they understood that God answered generously to those who had generously given

Noah built an Altar

“Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the LORD smelled a soothing aroma. Then the LORD said in His heart, “I will never again curse the ground for man’s sake, although the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done. “While the earth remains, Seedtime and harvest, Cold and heat, Winter and summer, And day and night Shall not cease.””
(Genesis 8:20–22, NKJV)

Abram built an Altar

“And he moved from there to the mountain east of Bethel, and he pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; there he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD.” (Genesis 12:8, NKJV)

- He visited the same place and built another altar when God brought him out of Egypt
 - He gave the best he had and God protected him
- He built another altar, with a generous sacrifice when God promised him and his descendants the land as a permanent possession
- He also offered his son Isaac – **Genesis 22**
 - God Provided!
- Abraham repeated this pattern at all major milestones in his life

At each of these significant “*markers*” in Abram's journey, he would stop, build an altar, and generously offer sacrifices to God

King David built an Altar

“David was thankful that the Lord had stopped the plague”
“Now Araunah said to David, “Let my lord the king take and offer up whatever seems good to him. Look, here are oxen for burnt sacrifice, and threshing implements and the yokes of the oxen for wood.”

“Then the king said to Araunah, “No, but I will surely buy it from you for a price; nor will I offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God with that which costs me nothing.” So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver. And David built there an altar to the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. So the LORD heeded the prayers for the land, and the plague was withdrawn from Israel.”

(2 Samuel 24:22, 24–25, NKJV)

David understood that if he was going to give something to God, it needed to be something that cost him something or it wasn't a sacrifice at all

- If we give what is comfortable to give it never truly qualifies as a sacrifice

“I do not believe one can settle how much we ought to give. I am afraid the only safe rule is to give more than we can spare. In other words, if our expenditure on comforts, luxuries, amusements, etc., is up to the standard common among those with the same income as our own, we are probably giving away too little. If our charities do not at all pinch or hamper us, I should say they are too small.” – C.S Lewis

God doesn't need our money, resources, and gifts – but when we generously give from a heart of worship, it demonstrates our love for God

“Giving is true loving” – Charles Spurgeon

When our giving is done gladly and truly costs us something, God's heart is deeply touched and He responds magnificently

“And Solomon went up there to the bronze altar before the LORD, which was at the tabernacle of meeting, and offered a thousand burnt offerings on it.” (2 Chronicles 1:6, NKJV)

- He would have had to plan for weeks, possibly months
- Animals had to be selected from the finest across the land
- They had to be gathered, transported, and prepared
- This would have required extra workers and priests
- He would have had to invest a great deal of thought, time, and money

All of this was done from a generous heart to honor God and call upon His name

- He needed God's generous response, so he gave generously that day

“That night God appeared to Solomon and said, “What do you want? Ask, and I will give it to you!” (2 Chronicles 1:7, NLT)

God was so deeply touched by Solomon's thought, preparation, and generosity that He wasted no time in responding

Dedicating the Temple

“When Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the temple.”

(2 Chronicles 7:1, NKJV)

- Solomon once again sensed a deep need for God’s help
- Recalling God’s generous response previously when he gave a generous offering
- He did it again, only more generously

“King Solomon offered a sacrifice of twenty-two thousand bulls and one hundred and twenty thousand sheep. So the king and all the people dedicated the house of God.”

(2 Chronicles 7:5, NKJV)

- Almost an unthinkable offering!
- How was this even possible?
- All in one day

“Then the LORD appeared to Solomon by night, and said to him: “I have heard your prayer, and have chosen this place for Myself as a house of sacrifice.” (2 Chronicles 7:12, NKJV)

- Solomon had discovered the principle of giving
- He knew that if he was generous with God, God would be generous with him

He later recorded this spiritual law

“Honor the LORD with your possessions, And with the firstfruits of all your increase; So your barns will be filled with plenty, And your vats will overflow with new wine.”

(Proverbs 3:9–10, NKJV)

Our Attitude in Giving makes a difference

“Who is there even among you who would shut the doors, So that you would not kindle fire on My altar in vain? I have no pleasure in you,” Says the LORD of hosts, “Nor will I accept an offering from your hands.” (Malachi 1:10, NKJV)

- Apparently, the Israelites were tired of sacrificial giving
- The fact that their hearts had drifted from giving was an indication that their hearts had drifted from the Lord
- God called them into account

“And when you offer the blind as a sacrifice, Is it not evil? And when you offer the lame and sick, Is it not evil? Offer it then to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you favorably?” Says the LORD of hosts.” (Malachi 1:8, NKJV)

- The Israelites were giving God the leftovers
- They loved themselves more than God – **Matthew 6:21**
- Follow the money, because it always tells the truth
- God didn't need their offerings and He doesn't need ours
- What God always wants is our hearts
- The way a person handles money always reveals their heart condition

““But cursed be the deceiver Who has in his flock a male, And takes a vow, But sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished— For I am a great King,” Says the LORD of hosts, “And My name is to be feared among the nations.” (Malachi 1:14, NKJV)

- God is serious about the attitude of our hearts when we give our tithes and offerings to Him

“Yet from the days of your fathers You have gone away from My ordinances And have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you,” Says the LORD of hosts. “But you said, ‘In what way shall we return?’ “Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, ‘In what way have we robbed You?’ In tithes and offerings.” (Malachi 3:7–8, NKJV)

- God was telling them they needed to get things right with Him
- The people were robbing God of what rightfully belonged to Him

“You are cursed with a curse, For you have robbed Me, Even this whole nation.” (Malachi 3:9, NKJV)

- When we rob God of what belongs to Him we remove ourselves from the realm of His blessings
- This verse doesn’t say God brings a curse
- We bring it through our attitude in giving

“Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house, And try 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 such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it.” “And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, So that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, Nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field,” Says the LORD of hosts;” (Malachi 3:10-11, NKJV)

- This is the remedy
- Of course, not every financial difficulty means a person’s heart is wrong
- We have an enemy
- God will rebuke the devourer
- He hasn’t changed – **Malachi 3:6**