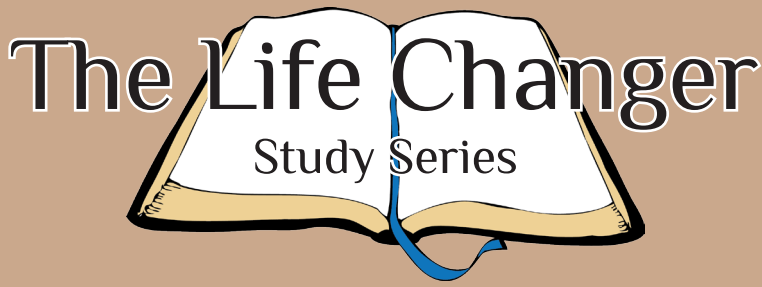


The Life Changer

Study Series



Stewardship of Wealth

In our last lesson we learned that stewardship is entering into cooperation with God in appreciation for what He has done for us. While we were helpless and without hope for eternal life, God gave Jesus to the world as a sin-offering for our salvation. We show our gratitude for God's gift by surrendering our lives into His service. We saw that stewardship in the life of the believer is expressed in four basic areas of life: our bodies, abilities, time and material goods and wealth.

Stewardship begins with the idea that God and Christ are the Ultimate owners of everything, including our bodies, abilities, time and wealth. God in His mercy has given us the privilege of being stewards over His own possessions. In our last lesson we looked at what the Bible says about the stewardship of our bodies, abilities and time. In this lesson we will look closely at how God expects us to be good stewards of material goods and wealth.



Lesson 16

① Q1. Where does our wealth come from? Read James 1:17 and Deuteronomy 8:18.

A. _____

② Q2. How are we to use our material and financial wealth? Read Acts 2:44, 45; Matthew 5:42; Deuteronomy 15:7,8; 1 Timothy 6:17-19 and Acts 20:35.

A. _____

Material wealth has been entrusted to us for doing good. We are not to be hard-hearted toward those who are poorer than ourselves. We are to help and lend. How much shall we help? We are to give according to their need as the Bible says in Deuteronomy 15:7, 8.

③ Q3. Does this mean we should give to those who are freeloaders? Read 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15.

A. _____

④ Q4. What example did the believers at Macedonia and Achaia make regarding their material wealth? Read Romans 15:26, 27.

A. _____

The believers at Macedonia and Achaia were indebted to the believers in Jerusalem for the spiritual inheritance that had been preserved by them through the centuries. Salvation had been authored by Jesus, the son of Abraham, the son of David and the good news had gone out to the world initially through Jewish apostles and believers. The Gentiles had received a spiritual blessing and inheritance from them. In Paul's day when the Jewish believers had fallen on financially hard times, it was the Gentiles' chance to minister to them with their giving. In the calamities and suffering in the world, the believer is called away from selfishness and is awakened to compassion, tenderness and love.

① Q5. What character trait do we see in God's activities? Read 1 John 4:8 and John 3:16.

A. _____

The spirit of giving is the spirit of heaven. The spirit of self-sacrificing love was shown in the life of Jesus. He gave all that He had and then He gave himself completely on the cross of Calvary. The spirit of selfishness is the spirit of Satan and his kingdom.

① Q6. What promises are made in the Bible for those who give? Read Proverbs 11:24; 3:9.

A. _____

① Q7. What other obligation do we see for the use of our money? Read 1 Corinthians 9:11-14.

A. _____

In the Old Testament the Levites were the priests and ministers of the worship services at the temple. They did not have any large land allotments; but were appointed to live in cities where they had enough land to plant a small garden and graze their animals. Both the Levites and the temple services were supported by what is known as tithes and offerings. Paul took that system as a model and said that those who work full time in gospel ministry should be supported with the tithe; the houses of worship and material necessities of the church should be supported with offerings.

① Q8. What is tithe? Read Leviticus 27:30-32.

A. _____

The tithe is simply a tenth of all our income. In the times of the patriarchs, one tenth of all the produce from the land belonged to God and one out of every ten animals belonged to the Lord. If anyone should borrow the

tithe he did so at a 20% interest rate to the Lord! Clearly God did not want people to borrow the tithe from God and try to pay it back. They would fall into financial trouble and not be able to meet their obligations to the Lord.

In today's society we deal more with cash than we do produce and animals. Therefore one tenth of our gross income is the Lord's. This is called the tithe.

❓ Q9. What was the tithe to be used for? Read Numbers 18:21-24.

A. _____

The Levites were to receive the tithe for their work in full-time gospel ministry. In the same way, according to the New Testament those who have been called by God and appointed by the church to do full-time gospel ministry are to be supported with the tithes of the church members.

God commanded that the gospel be preached in all the world. While some go forth to preach, others are called upon to support this sacred work. God can create matter out of nothing by the power of His word. God can speak and there would be money in everyone's hand in abundance for everything. But He doesn't do this. He places means in people's hands in order that His divine gifts may flow through human channels to save others. In essence, God is lifting up man by calling him to have sympathy for others and encouraging him to use the highest faculties of his mind. If the opportunity for giving were not available, we would not be able to develop a generous character.

We cannot make God rich by giving Him gifts. All things come from Him and when we give we are simply returning what belongs to Him. God gives us opportunity to show our appreciation to Him for the gift of salvation by making self-sacrificing efforts for the salvation of others.

❓ Q10. What example did the patriarchs set in regard to tithe? Read

Genesis 14:18-20; 28:22.

A. _____

① Q11. What did Jesus say regarding tithe? Read Matthew 23:23.

A. _____

Jesus supported the tithing system but cautioned that giving money to God is not the sum of our religious duty. Just like the Pharisees, a man could faithfully give his tithe and still be far from God because he lacks love in his heart.

① Q12. What are offerings? How are they to be used? Read Exodus 36:2-7; 27:20.

A. _____

Offerings are gifts that we make over and above our tithes. There is no specified amount for our offerings; we simply give according to how we believe the Lord has blessed us. The offerings are for the buildings and items used for worship. The tithe is not to be used except for supporting gospel workers. All the other equipment and non-moveable goods necessary to have worship and ministry are to be purchased with free-will offerings.

① Q13. With what spirit should we give? Read 2 Corinthians 9:7.

A. _____

Our greatest conflict is with self. Returning tithe and giving offerings gives us opportunity to overcome the natural selfishness within us. In addition to this it brings us into harmony with God. Releasing back to Him a portion of our salary is a reminder that He is the source of every blessing. Our offerings come from a thankful heart and a trust that God can use those monies collectively in a greater way than we can as individuals.

❓ Q14. What attitude does God take toward those who do not participate in His plan of giving and stewardship? Read Malachi 3:8-10.

A. _____

God commands us to give. We are debtors to Him for everything, but then He promises to reward us if we do what He commands. That is grace!

❓ Q15. After we return our tithe and give an offering, is the rest of the money we have ours to do what we wish? Read 1 Chronicles 29:12-14.

A. _____

Even after we have returned our tithes and given our offerings we must remember that we are stewards over God's goods. We are not to use our bodies, abilities, time and wealth for selfish pleasures while others are in need of the gospel and grace. We are to do all we can to uplift ourselves and humanity.

❓ Q16. What does the Bible say about stewardship of the earth? Read Revelation 11:18.

A. _____

❓ Q17. For those who are concerned that they will not survive if they give to the Lord, what example is given in Scripture? Read 1 Kings 17:8-16.

A. _____



Shining Stars Series (Philippians 2:14-16)



Even after the reassuring words of 1 Kings 17:8-16 were read, there was an uneasy silence in the room. The group had just completed their study of Stewardship of Wealth and the mood seemed rather somber.

Each person looked around at the others wondering who would be first to say something. Finally Fatma said uneasily, "Well that was an interesting lesson wasn't it?"

Mehmet, who was usually quick to comment about the details of a subject, seemed completely absorbed in his own world. He didn't respond. Fatma's mother, Türkan opened with a comment.

"I had always heard about almsgiving as a part of religious life. I have listened to the discussions on how you calculate alms and how they should be given. I never really did it systematically in my life. When I see some beggar on the street, if they happen to look like they couldn't work for a living, I try to help out with a few coins."

Reşat jumped in, "What the Bible is talking about here is more than a few coins. It is a lot of money. How is anyone going to survive on 10% less income in this economy?"

"More than that if you count offerings," said Fatma. "I don't know about all of you, but when I think about my finances, I am having a hard time seeing how I can do this."

Fatma, with that confession, really opened the issue that seemed to be bothering everyone. Each person in the group was lost in thought on what would happen to their life if they returned tithe and gave offerings. Refreshed by the honesty, Reşat spoke again.

"I know what you mean Fatma. I am doing the math in my head. It seems crazy."

Afife, seeing the concerned look on her husband's face said, "Well we could at least look at it. After all, the Bible is pretty clear that if we don't do it we are thieves. That is really strong language. I don't want to be a thief in God's eyes. Maybe we could tighten up on some things. We don't have to have Digiturk for example. Most of the stuff on T.V. is silly anyway. We could spend our time doing something more profitable."

Everyone shook their head affirmatively.

Gül, who had been quiet up to this point, spoke up and said, "We need to believe God's promises. If He commands us to do something He will take care of the results. Really, this whole money thing is about trusting God. Remember when God told the Israelites to cross the Red Sea? There was nowhere to go. But God led them there. When the Egyptians came, God did a miracle to save them. And we just read how God worked a miracle and provided the meal and the oil throughout the drought. If we truly believe that God is real, why don't we trust Him to keep His word? He did invite us to challenge Him on this. He said He would pour out a blessing on us. So much so, we couldn't receive it."

The group seemed a little embarrassed to receive such an elementary lesson in faith from the youngest member of the group.

Reşat was first to respond, "That is easy for you to say because you are only twelve years old and don't know what it is like to provide for a family."

Mehmet was still quiet.

Fatma said, "Mehmet, are you O.K.?"

Mehmet said nothing for a moment. His eyes were down and he looked like he was about to cry.

"Look, you guys. This is more than just some money. Yes, money is an issue, but it is more than that for me. Reşat, Afife, if you want to you can make a decision together and tighten the belt and do this business. Fatma, if you want to return tithe and give an offering, Mert and Gül can't say anything about it. They are your children and you have the money in your hands. You don't have a husband that will fight you on this. If I do this, my wife will hit the roof. She will say I've lost my mind. For you guys it is a financial decision only. For me, it may cost me my marriage. All she has to do is go to the court and say her



husband is giving 15% of his income to a church and my divorce will be complete. Do you understand what I am saying?"

"Up until now, most of what we have been talking about is belief. If I believe in Jesus, my neighbors don't know, my wife doesn't even know completely. It is in my heart. But now we are talking about the active expression of our faith that effects other people's lives. Now I am imposing my religion upon my wife. I can do it, I mean, I can say, 'I am the man of the house, this is the way it will be.' She can't beat me up. But my married life might be miserable."

"Maybe it won't be so bad." Fatma said. "God can work things out and your wife won't fight you on it. We will be praying for you."

There was silence again in the room as everyone digested the impact of what the Bible was saying. Returning tithe and giving offerings was putting their faith to the test. It placed them in a position where they could no longer rely on themselves but had to rely on the miracle-working power of God. Did they really believe God's promises? Their timidity and hesitation revealed how much they disliked being vulnerable and dependent on God. A little child reminded them to believe and trust.

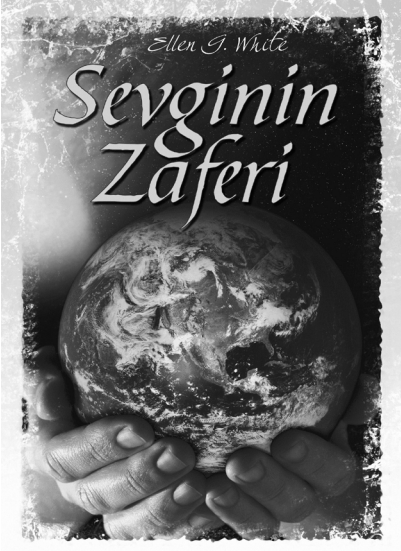
Finally Türkan spoke up again, "Let's pray and ask that God give us strength to give this a try."

① Q18. What do you think Fatma should do regarding tithes and offerings? What about Mehmet? Why?

A. _____

Call to commitment through prayer.

SEVGİNİN ZAFERİ



Kötülüğün kaynağı, henüz çözülememiş bir sırdır. Neden kötülük var? Nereden geliyor? Kötülüğün bir sonu olacak mı? Bunlar yanıtlanması gereken çok önemli sorulardır.

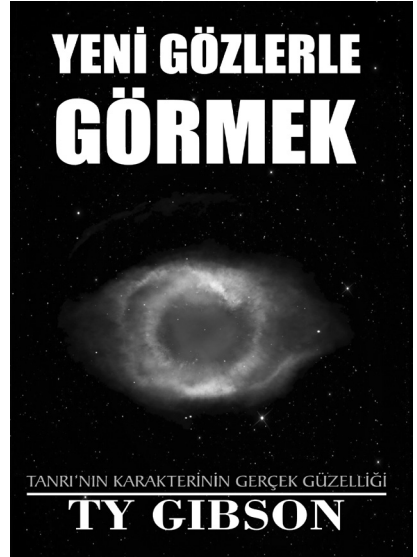
Büyük mücadele, görünen dünyayı, görünmeyen dünyadan ayıran perdeyi aralamakta ve bu dünyanın tüm sakinlerinin dahil olduğu doğüstü savaşı gözler önüne ermektedir.

Kitap, uğrunda savaştıkları şey için çok önemli olan iki tarafın, iyinin ve kötünün arasında geçen evrensel savaşın nasıl başladığından ve nasıl sonlandırılacağından bahsetmektedir. Geçmişten, şimdiki zamandan ve gelecekte söz etmekte, çok dokunaklı bir ricayla ve ciddi bir uyarıyla sona ermektedir. Bu kitabı okurken, sanki Tanrı ile röportaj yapıyormuş hissine kapılacaksınız.

Güzel olduğu kadar şok edici bir yolculuğa çıkmaya hazırlanın. Okuduktan sonra artık aynı kişi olmayacaksınız.

YENİ GÖZLERLE GÖRMEK

Pek çok şeyi görebilmek için, kişinin gözleri açık olmalıdır. Fakat Allah ile öyle değil. Gözlerinizi çok fazla açarsanız ya da çok fazla yakından bakarsanız, O'nu gördüğünüzü düşünürken aslında O'nu gözden kaçırabilirsiniz. Pek çoğumuz tam da bu hatayı yaparız. Allah'ı görmeyi umarak insanlara bakarız. Dinlere bakarız. Hatta aynaya bakarız. Kaçınılmaz olarak da hayal kırıklığına uğrarız, zira İlahî Kişi'nin daha güzel bir resmini ummuştuk. Sayısız insan Allah'tan dönmüştür, çünkü O'nu bir kişide ya da bir toplulukta gördüklerini sanmışlardır... ve açıkçası gördüklerinden hoşlanmamışlardır. Elinizde tuttuğunuz kitap Allah hakkındadır.





Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 2:1-5)



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This study series is a continuation of the Fate Changer series
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