

# Spiritual Discipline: Stewardship of Money

October 2015

A steward is someone entrusted to look after another person's belongings or property. God owns everything and blesses us with all we have (Ex 19:5; Ps 24:1; Job 41:11). He expects that we will maintain a right perspective toward those things He allows to flow through our lives. He expects us to use these resources to meet the needs of our family (1 Tim 5:8), to worship Him through tithing (Gen 28:22; Num 18:28), and minister to others (2 Cor 8:1-5). Beyond being a simple matter of obedience, our giving indicates our spiritual maturity and godliness – not necessarily in the amount, but in the attitude and spirit in which we give. Below are principles to indicate the quality of our stewardship in this area.

## Principles of Being a Good Steward of God's Money:

### 1. First Give Your Heart

Jesus made it clear that the first battle we face when it comes to our giving is in our heart. In Luke 16:10-13 Jesus points out that we cannot serve God and money. Our faithfulness and honesty are glimpses into our hearts, and where our heart lies our true treasure (Mt 6:21). Faced with a heart choice, the rich young ruler chose his money over Jesus (Luke 18:18-23). 2 Cor 9:7 encourages believers to give with a "cheerful" heart.

### 2. A Tithe Is Foundational

Biblical tithing is an exercise of faith, not obligation. OT Law implemented several tithes, consisting of all of the increase you would find in an agrarian society and totaling over 20% of their resources. In the NT, the basic principle of tithing ("tenth") is assumed. Jesus' strongest condemnations were against those who tithed with the wrong motivation and spirit (Luke 11:42). In the world we live in, the tithe (10% of one's earned wage), is given through the local church, not simply to pay the bills and salaries for that church, but also to do disaster relief, fund seminaries, and do ministry and missions locally, statewide, nationally and globally.

### 3. Give To Special Offerings

Above and beyond the tithe, we regularly encounter several opportunities throughout the year to give toward special offerings. Missions offerings, hunger offerings, and building fund offerings are just a few examples. While tithing is planned giving, of usually a set amount, special offerings are given freely to meet a need or goal.

### 4. Exercise Generosity

Jesus' highest praise was directed toward the poor widow in Mark 12:41-44, who gave all she had even though, monetarily, it was very little. He praised her generous spirit. Beyond tithing and giving to special offerings, we should allow God to use our finances to bless others. Some people designate "giving funds" in their purse or wallet and ask God to impress on them when to give to meet a need. This could include a neighbor, friend, or church member in need. Guilt is never a good motivation to give. When giving to the homeless or panhandlers, it is always better to meet the need by giving food, a care package, or a "manna" bag, not cash.

Throughout the month of October, live out the spiritual discipline of Stewardship of Money by working through the items below and discussing them with your 222 Group.

- If you don't already have one, sit down and develop a budget, including all your family income, and commit to giving to God 1/10<sup>th</sup> of all you make. If that is too large a step, where can you start? 3%? 5%? 7%? Develop a plan to increase your giving each year until you reach 10%.
- Examine your life over the past three months and answer the following question: "What do your activities and your spending pattern say about you as a steward of God's money?"
- From the list above, which of the stewardship principles have been simple for you to implement? Which ones have you struggled with?
- Go to [ministrygrid.com](http://ministrygrid.com) and in the "Have a Membership Code?" field type in the following code: **14BDMI**. If this is your first time using Ministry Grid, you will be asked to create a free profile. View Sessions 4-6 of the Simple Life video series (You viewed Sessions 1-3 last month) and discuss new insights with your 222 Group.