

# **Generosity...**

## **God's reciprocating Law!**

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### **Introduction:**

What do we mean by Generosity? What do you understand when somebody says he or she is a generous person? I think that the first thing we may think about is that the person is liberal in their giving. We inevitably think about the monetary side first then maybe the time side and the things that people may do for others or yourself.

I remember as a little boy when we had very little and mother and I were struggling along on our own that often we would come home and find that my aunty and uncle had visited and left a box of vegetables or fruit in the kitchen- they knew where we hid the key! They were farmers and Aunty Flo was one of those generous persons who was always helping others. She had been helped by others through a period of intense grief in her life when her eldest son and my cousin, had died from Tetanus. She was a loving generous person who was always giving even when there could be no possible reciprocation. She never gave in order to receive.

God is generous with us and has freely given us all things in the earth to enjoy. Scripture says...

*Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life **1Tim 6:17-19.***

There is no doubt from this passage that the Lord intends us to be generous towards others. **Luke** reminds us that as we sow so shall we reap...

***6:38** 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."*

There is an essence here of reciprocation. God has given to us all things to enjoy and what He has given us He expects us to share with others...give and it will be given...it will be measured back! This idea of reciprocation is a Biblical principle...for instance as you are judged so you will be judged...

***Matthew 7:1,2.** "Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.*

I want us to look at this for I feel that there is a divine order that God has placed within the universe as far as our reciprocation is concerned...The first degree of that order is that the first fruits always belong to God.

## 1. The first fruits of our harvest, crops and labour belong to God:

As we see the divine order laid down from us through the Bible we note that Israel had to offer the first fruits of the crops to God. They belonged to God. **Ex.34: 26** *"Bring the best of the firstfruits of your soil to the house of the LORD your God.*

One way that these were brought was as a wave offering ...

**Lev.23:20a.** *The priest shall wave them with the bread of the firstfruits as a wave offering before the LORD,*

The first of all things belongs to the Lord. In saying this the principle is laid down that all things come from Him and belong to Him and a portion needs to go back to Him in recognition of that fact.

This was evidenced in the tithe that Abraham gave to Melchizedek the high priest of Salem from the spoils of battle against Chedorlaomer...

**Gen.14:14,16,18-20.** *Now when Abram heard that his brother (Lot) was taken captive, he armed his three hundred and eighteen trained servants who were born in his own house, and went in pursuit as far as Dan... So he brought back all the goods, and also brought back his brother Lot and his goods, as well as the women and the people... Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said: "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand." And he gave him a tithe of all.*

In recognition of all that God has given us in His generosity He asks that we return back to Him a portion which is **called a tithe**. So what is a tithe?

## 2. What is a tithe?

Let's read a very practical example of what the OT identifies as a tithe.

**Lev.27:28-30.** *'Nevertheless no devoted offering that a man may devote to the LORD of all that he has, both man and beast, or the field of his possession, shall be sold or redeemed; every devoted offering is most holy to the LORD. No person under the ban, who may become doomed to destruction among men, shall be redeemed, but shall surely be put to death. And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD's. It is holy to the LORD.*

In this passage on the tithe the Lord makes it clear that the tithe whether it be of the land (animal) or of the seed or tree (crops and fruit) is His. The Hebrew here says that it is a "devoted" offering. The word devoted is "*Cherem*" meaning devoted to destruction, to be destroyed, or consumed. That would take place either through sacrifice or by priestly provision. In this context...

every year a shepherd would take of the increase of his flocks and pass them under a rod. He would count 1-10 and every tenth would be consecrated to the Lord. It belonged to God for sacrifice or for the maintenance of the priesthood. If the person thought that he would keep one that passed under the rod and exchange it for a poorer animal then the whole herd was devoted to destruction. The principle here is that you can't keep what belongs to God without it affecting you and what you possess. So you can't exchange it or keep it without losing the whole lot! Another thing that you are penalised for is if you decide to use it for a time then pay it; in other words in borrowing it you are penalised twenty percent (**V.31**). So we see that a tithe is one tenth of our increase and belongs to God.

### 3. Why should we tithe?

Because it is God's portion that we reciprocate back to Him in acknowledgement that all that we have on this earth belongs to Him and because He mandates that we do it. God promises a blessing if we are generous towards Him!

**Mal.3: 10** *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.*

Not to bring them into the house of God is to rob Him...

**Mal.3:8,9.** *"Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, For you have robbed Me, Even this whole nation.*

Nobody wants the prospect of a curse but that is the reality of what God's word says...BUT look at the benefits...God's word says blessing but there is more!

**Mal.3:10,11.** *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;*

Note that the Lord says that in tithing he will rebuke the devourer for our sakes. Note that the devourer here is personalised. It is a he! Who is the Lord speaking about but none other than satan! **1 Peter 5:8.** Bringing our tithes into the house of God is an act of spiritual warfare! God rebukes the devil on our behalf. You can't walk in the blessing of God and steal from Him at the same time!

#### **In conclusion:**

Giving is an evidence of our faith in God. We are to trust Him with our first fruits and leave the rest up to Him. We do not give in order to receive but rather we give because it is a principle of Scripture that has a commensurate blessing accompanying it. Scripture promises that if we...

**Eccl.11:1** *Cast your bread upon the waters, For you will find it after many days.*

Be generous with God, be generous with people and God will be generous with you!

#### **Questions**

1. What do you understand by the term generous?
2. What do we mean by a law of reciprocating order?
3. Why does God expect us to return a portion back to Him?
4. What does Scripture mean by the term tithe?
5. What happens if we keep back God's portion and fail to give that back to Him? What does God call this?
6. What does God promise us if we are faithful with the tithe and who is the devourer?