

HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH?

By John Gagliardi



The Bible tells us that God gives us the power to get wealth (Deuteronomy 8: 18) and that if we sow generously, we will reap generously (2 Corinthians 9: 6). Indeed, it further tells us that as we give (sow), the harvest we reap will be "good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over" (Luke 6: 38).

As Christians, we are heirs (Galatians 3: 29) to the promises God gave to our father in the faith, Abraham, that He would bless us so that we can be a blessing (Genesis 12: 2). So there is nothing wrong with giving and expecting to receive back, as long as our intention is to continue to give.

As we activate God's Biblical economic principles, we find the old saying to be totally true: we can never out-give God. He is a giving God, and His very nature is to give – so when God lives in us through His Holy Spirit, our nature also becomes a giving and generous nature.

As Roy C. Stedman says in a recent article entitled *Giving Generously*: "True giving must be expectant giving ... there is nothing wrong with recognizing that you will be benefited by your giving, because the Word everywhere tells us that. If you give so that you might have more to give, you are right in line with God's program."

But when it comes to money, many people still have a lingering guilt about wealth and prosperity, in spite of the preponderance of Scriptures to the contrary. Many of us have grown up in a church tradition where poverty is somehow identified with holiness, and wealth is seen as worldly and evil.

Which often leads on to a very common question – **how much is enough?** Should we have just enough to cover our basic needs, or should we, like Oliver in the famous Dickens' novel, "Oliver Twist," ask for "**More please?**"

The answer is that God invites us to ask Him for exactly that – **MORE PLEASE!** He is a God of super-abundance and "more-than-enough", He is El Shaddai, the All-Sufficient God, and it

was by that name that God introduced Himself to Abraham (Abram): "And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD (Jehovah) appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God (El-Shaddai); walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly" (Genesis 17:1-2).

God's first command to mankind after He created them was to "be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 1: 28). God's essence is multiplication and fruitfulness – not poverty and scarcity. He wants us to ask for more, so we can bear fruit and be a blessing to others. How can we obey God's commands to be fruitful and "be a blessing", if we only have just enough to scrape by frugally to cover our own most basic needs?

God spells it out very clearly in Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians: "He who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully ... and God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work ... while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving to God" (2 Corinthians 9: 6-10).

The Message Bible puts it even more bluntly: "God can pour on the blessings in astonishing ways so that you're ready for anything and everything, more than just ready to do what needs to be done. As one psalmist puts it, 'He throws caution to the winds, giving to the needy in reckless abandon ...' This most generous God ... gives you something you can then give away, which grows into full-formed lives, robust in God, wealthy in every way, so that you can be generous in every way, producing with us great praise to God ... You show your gratitude through your generous offerings to your needy brothers and sisters, and ...everyone."

There is no escaping what God is telling us in these Scriptures – He does not want us to have "just enough", but to have "more than enough", so we can attend to our own needs, and then always have plenty left over to bless others and meet their needs.

How we handle money is a key test of our character – if we have a mean and selfish heart, then money will only multiply those traits, and lead to unhappiness and disillusionment. If we have a generous and giving heart, then money will enable us to bless many around us, and open us up to the "true riches" He has in store for us.

Pastor Ken Kelly in 2004 wrote an article, "*How Much Money Is Enough*", as part of a series on the Bible and money. The first thing he said was that money would never meet our needs for satisfaction, significance or security. Only God could do that.

He believes that God has chosen money as a key indicator of what is really inside us: "The way you handle your money here on earth will determine your rewards as a believer in heaven. Why did God choose money as the acid test for character? Because our lives are dominated by it. We spend most of our lives making it, thinking about it, spending it, investing it, wondering what we're going to do with it or without it.

"So God uses money as a test to see what we're really like on the inside. You cannot be a mature Christian without settling the issue of money in your life. Increased income brings increased responsibility. The more I have, the more God holds me accountable.

"If you want to become like God, you must become a giver. God is a generous giver. The more generous you become, the more like God you become ... You cannot serve God and money. You must decide. And your giving demonstrates what's first place in your life

... (Money) represents your heart. Wherever your wealth goes, that's where your heart goes."

So our attitude to money and wealth is all-important to God – if we want money to hoard it up and spend it on ourselves and our selfish wants, then God is not going to "open the windows of heaven" to us and pour down such a blessing that we wouldn't even have enough room to receive it (Malachi 3: 10). James gives us a somber warning in this regard: "You ask and you do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures" (James 4: 3).

God indeed gives us the power to produce wealth, but not so we can misuse it and spend it on profligate living and selfish pursuits, but rather so that we can use it to "confirm His Covenant" – the Covenant He made with Abraham (and with us as Abraham's heirs) in Genesis 12: 2 and 3:

***I will bless you and make your name great;
And you shall be a blessing.
I will bless those who bless you,
And I will curse him who curses you;
And in you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed.***