

**[1]**  
**The Art of Giving**  
**December 27, 2015**  
**Dale Stevens, Jaden Welsh, Jeff Germs**

**Jeff:** Jaden studied for a year at Kaleo Bible School at Camp Qwanoes and for one of his research papers he decided to write on biblical giving and tithing, which sort of seems like a strange thing for a young guy to be interested in. But, it worked out well for me because I was planning on doing this final sermon of the year on giving so I thought, "Why not let Jaden do my work for me?"

So, first of all, Jaden what made you decide to write your research paper on giving?

**Jaden:** Well it's a bit of a funny story Jeff, I don't even know what I was thinking at the time. I mean really, what does a poor university student know about giving? I mean you can't give what you don't have! Haha but seriously. Our Professor wanted us to choose a topic surrounding the church and the goal was to reach a biblical understanding of our topic by the end our paper. I knew this to be an area I struggled in on and off in the past and decided it was time for change.

Jeff: Can you tell us a bit more of the struggle you had with giving?

**Jaden:** Tithing and giving to the church had always been difficult for me. In high school, I would go through stages of giving everything I had to the church, to withholding my offerings out of fear. This went on and off for years, it is still an area I struggle in. Needless to say, I specifically chose this topic because I knew that the more I discovered God's call to be good stewards, the more the doubt and distrust of my finances built up over the years would be removed. As a student with a rather intimidating loan and 4 more years left of school, realistically I can't afford to give to the church. But I made it my goal last year and in the future, to give what little I do have for I know that God will honour my sacrifice.

**Jeff:** I've also got Dale up here with me. Dale is the chairman of our board and he is a very faithful partner in the ministry. I really don't know how I could do my job without him. Dale, we have talked quite a bit about giving over the last two and a half years. I have seen that you are very passionate about the church and God's call on your life and the part he has for you to play at CRBC. I have also seen that you have been developing a vision and a passion for giving as well. Can you briefly tell us a bit about your journey? Has giving always been easy for you?

**Dale:** No, not really, I have always been taught to strive to be a good giver, to be generous, to be faithful in giving, my parents have been a great example to me of this.

But in the past I have misunderstood giving as just another 'responsibility' and at times that has cultivated a deep sense of guilt around giving. I have been guilty of giving only to things I deemed most important, in an attempt at voting with my wallet. In the past I have misunderstood the importance of giving to my Church, there is plenty of opportunity out there to give, why the church? I have had many incorrect ideas around the 'Art of Giving.'

Jeff: Okay, let's dig into God's Word now. Jaden, you wrote a paper on tithing and giving for Bible school. Can you give us a bit of biblical background on giving in the Old Testament? What is tithing and what was its purpose?

**Jaden:** Biblical definition of tithing, original purpose.

**[2]**

1. Greek word for tithing. Aparché is the Greek word for “gift of the first fruits, an offering or gift.” Tithing is very similar but defined by a “giving of a tenth of one’s produce” (Deut. 26:2, NLT).

**[3]**

2. Abraham is the first recorded account of biblical tithing. the principle of firsts marks the premier of biblical tithing found within Genesis 14:20. Melchizedek takes his share by right, foreshadowing how the Levitical Priests were “to collect a tenth” from their fellow Israelites. Through this offering, Melchizedek blesses Abraham. It is this representation of Abraham's heart of thanks that defines his legacy.

B. God's intent for tithing, both towards Him and provision to the Levites.

**[4]**

The tithing law was originally designed to serve two purposes, the first was for the Israelites to give thanks to the Lord for His provision, while also providing for their Levite brethren (Deut. 26:11, NLT). Here we see God creatively designing a system that narrows in on the act of service to remind the individual in several areas; He created and owns everything, it also brings to light God's past mercies to the nation and that it may encourage them to choose tithing out of their own free will. Through this, the Lord made sure that the Levites were taken care of so they could be free to go about their priestly duties by processing the tithes from the people. This biblical law is comparable to living a life in full-time ministry, by offering up the very best of one’s life to serving the Lord faithfully, you are shadowing the duty of a Levite.

**Jeff:** Ok, let’s take a look at the New Testament now. And then I want to ask how this relates to us in the twenty first century? We are no longer under the law of Moses where they were required to give a tithe (ten percent) of their earnings to God. Jesus came and satisfied the law - every part of it - through his death on the cross.

**[5]**

**There really is no command to tithe in the New Testament.** There is lots to say about giving and being generous, but no command to tithe. The closest you come is when Jesus confronts the Pharisees and teachers of the law about their strict observance of the law without caring about people.

**[6]**

**Matthew 23:23 (NLT)**

***23 “What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are careful to tithe even the tiniest income from your herb gardens, but you ignore the more important aspects of the law—justice, mercy, and faith. You should tithe, yes, but do not neglect the more important things.***

That’s the closest we get to a command to tithe, and that was before Jesus satisfied the law through his death on the cross. So, what does all this mean for us today? Does God even care about how we use “our” money ?

Let’s take a look at 2 Corinthians and talk about some of the things that stand out to you.

**[7]**

**2 Corinthians 8:1–15 (NLT)**

***<sup>1</sup>Now I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters, what God in his kindness has done through the churches in Macedonia.***

**Jeff:** So, Jaden, what is going on here. What's the context?

**Jaden:** Paul is informing the Corinthians of the generosity and love of the Macedonians. He is using their example to “set the bar” as he begins to unravel what it truly means to give to the church. This allows Paul the opportunity to share the “why we give” to the Corinthians.

**[8]**

***<sup>2</sup>They are being tested by many troubles, and they are very poor. But they are also filled with abundant joy, which has overflowed in rich generosity. <sup>3</sup>For I can testify that they gave not only what they could afford, but far more. And they did it of their own free will. <sup>4</sup>They begged us again and again for the privilege of sharing in the gift for the believers in Jerusalem.***

**Dale:** ‘They are very poor, filled with joy and overflowing in rich generosity, giving away more than they could afford, of their own free will, for the privilege of it....’ I am a stats guy. I like to google facts, I recently looked at generosity by country, does anyone know what the most charitable country in the world is?

**[10]**

According to the World Giving Index, I found out that the most charitable country is Myanmar, it is also the 23rd poorest nation in the world. Canada is the 4th most charitable, and the 11th richest.

**[11]**

***<sup>5</sup>They even did more than we had hoped, for their first action was to give themselves to the Lord and to us, just as God wanted them to do. <sup>6</sup>So we have urged Titus, who encouraged your giving in the first place, to return to you and encourage you to finish this ministry of giving. <sup>7</sup>Since you excel in so many ways—in your faith, your gifted speakers, your knowledge, your enthusiasm, and your love from us—I want you to excel also in this gracious act of giving.***

**[10]**

**Jeff:** Is giving something that we normally think about excelling at? We do think of getting better at a lot of things. I have worked hard at becoming a better photographer and a better preacher. What have you guys worked hard at becoming better at?

**Dale:** In my Dreams late at night, I work at being a better skier

**[11]**

and a better hockey player.....it's not working..... I want to be a better person, I want to be a better follower of Christ, and it seems like generosity is a component of this.

**Jaden:** I make it my goal in life to make sure that every encounter I have with someone, be it a friend or stranger, is meaningful and friendly. I also like think that I work hard at being a part-time **super hero**. **[12]**

**[13]**

***<sup>8</sup>I am not commanding you to do this. But I am testing how genuine your love is by comparing it with the eagerness of the other churches.***

**Jeff:** This is an interesting comment. We have already said that in the New Testament, we are not under the law. Tithing is not a command that we have to follow so God will love us or be

pleased with us. However, how we use our money is a barometer that shows the condition of our hearts.

**Dale:** It's funny that after 40 plus years of regularly attending church, it's only in the past few that I have come to realize how privileged we are to be in this family that spans the globe. That we as individual Christ followers collectively make up 'the Bride of Christ'. We are being called to participate in God's plan, Jesus left the Church, his Bride, guided by the Holy Spirit, to spread and cultivate the Gospel to a world that needs redemption, until he returns. Our attitude and actions toward generosity is clearly one indicator of where we see ourselves in that plan.

**Jaden:** *Haplotēs* is another Greek word Paul uses in this passage and it is describing the generosity and unity found in giving to the church. Of course we don't HAVE to give like the other churches, but we must understand that our image to the world as ambassadors of Christ reflects on how we personally view and accept giving.

[14]

***<sup>9</sup>You know the generous grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty he could make you rich.***

**Dale:** *It's interesting to me that Grace is prefaced by the word generous. Grace in itself is generous by nature.*

**Jeff:** So, true. Two thousand years ago Jesus satisfied the law. We no longer give because of obligation. We give now because we get to give. We have the image of a generous God stamped in our hearts and out that abundance mentality we give. It's a totally different mindset.

**Jaden:** I find it interesting how Grace is the focus of this passage. Jesus had all the money in the world, yet he chose to humble himself so that we could be rich in Him.

[15]

***<sup>10</sup>Here is my advice: It would be good for you to finish what you started a year ago. Last year you were the first who wanted to give, and you were the first to begin doing it. <sup>11</sup>Now you should finish what you started. Let the eagerness you showed in the beginning be matched now by your giving. Give in proportion to what you have.***

**Jeff:** I think this whole passage is interesting because Paul is talking about a group of people who are not necessarily wealthy, but they are excited about giving what they have.

[16]

**What is so exciting about giving?**

**Dale:** Maybe when Jesus said it's more blessed to give than receive he really meant it. Maybe joy does come from giving. We tend to think the more we have, or the more we get the happier we are. But, Jesus says the opposite is true. Joy comes from giving what God has given us. He blesses us so we can be a blessing to others.

**Jaden:** It brings us Joy! I mean, who doesn't like surprise gifts from a friend? I know how amazing it feels to be thought of and to receive something, therefore it is important that we continually give to the Lord and our neighbours. It's a cycle of never-ending awesomeness.

[17]

***<sup>12</sup>Whatever you give is acceptable if you give it eagerly. And give according to what you have, not what you don't have. <sup>13</sup>Of course, I don't mean your giving should make life easy for others and hard for yourselves. I only mean that there should be some equality.***

**Jeff:** So, when we talk about being generous we are not talking about overextending ourselves so much that we have without so the needs of others are met.

**Dale:** That is a hard one though. We can easily justify what we think we need to have, or what going without means to us. We need to understand what going without means in light of God's economy, not our economy. Sometimes our desire to be good stewards can make us fearful of not leaving enough in our savings account or making what appears to be a poor financial decision. Jesus' idea of generosity often times turns my perception of stewardship on its head, generosity is oftentimes not 'rational', i.e. It may mean giving away what i thought to be mine.

**Jeff:** This next part answers this.

[18]

***<sup>14</sup>Right now you have plenty and can help those who are in need. Later, they will have plenty and can share with you when you need it. In this way, things will be equal. <sup>15</sup>As the Scriptures say, "Those who gathered a lot had nothing left over, and those who gathered only a little had enough."***

**Dale:** This is another tough one for me, especially if you consider yourself a good steward. I am learning that a humble heart is willing to accept help when needed. Again this is different than the common thought that says 'if I have my act together, i shouldn't need help...'

When we are generous givers, we sometimes get to know the impact of our generosity, and if we are open to help, we may experience the impact of acceptance on the generous giver.

**Jeff:** Jaden, as you mentioned in your paper, there is only one area that the Bible challenges us to test God. What did you discover about that?

**Jaden:** In Malachi, I found this passage quite intriguing. Nowhere else in scripture do we see God openly invite us to challenge Him. The only thing we are allowed to test the Lord in is giving. We simply cannot outgive God.

[19]

**Malachi 3:8–10 (NLT)**

***<sup>8</sup>"Should people cheat God? Yet you have cheated me! "But you ask, 'What do you mean? When did we ever cheat you?' "You have cheated me of the tithes and offerings due to me. <sup>9</sup>You are under a curse, for your whole nation has been cheating me.***

[20]

***<sup>10</sup>Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough food in my Temple. If you do," says the Lord of Heaven's Armies, "I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won't have enough room to take it in! Try it! Put me to the test!***

**Jeff:** So, what's going on here, Jaden?

**Jaden:** We see that the Israelites have been depriving themselves of the Lord's blessing and living in complete denial by withholding their tithes and offerings (those poor Levites!) from the Lord. God is questioning their poor choices and reminds them that giving is not a complicated process. In fact it is SO easy that He PROMISES to return His presence to the nation and bless them beyond measure. And for those who would even dare doubt this promise, He puts forth a challenge "Try it, put me to the test!" This was not a one time deal, for we see it transcends into the New Testament and is equally applicable then as it is today.

**Jeff:** Jesus talked about how we use our money more than almost any other topic. Why do you think that is?

**Dale:** How we use our money is a barometer of the condition of our heart.... it is no different than anything else we have been given through him. I think he talks about it so much, because he knew, as a human, how difficult it can be for us to give of our riches.

**Jaden:** Because the world forces us to depend and put our trust in a lie. Every part of our society revolves around the almighty dollar, Christ wanted us to understand that there is more to life than money. "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and give to God what is God's."

**Jeff:** Dale, how do you think God would challenge us at CRBC as we are finishing off 2015 and heading into 2016?

**[21]**

**Dale:** Firstly, I would just like to thank all of you whom have given to CRBC this past year. You have given of your time, your talents and your finances and for that we are grateful. We are grateful for the results of these gifts; for the changed lives, for many Baptisms, for the support of missions. We are grateful for the physical needs that have been met through benevolence and prayer and fellowship. There is so much, mostly we are grateful to our Heavenly Father who supplies all our needs, so that we may also give.

I would be thrilled to see us finish off 2015 financially strong, and to be able to give our supported missionaries a year end payment that would make up any shortfalls that they may be experiencing. Heading into 2016, we would be grateful for your prayers as the board is tasked with making decisions for our upcoming budget. Many of these decisions will be based on looking back at 2015 and years previous. Please pray for us, and with us as we consider how God would have each of us give in 2016, and pray that we would be a Church that uses the tithes and offerings given in His name to be obedient to that which he has called us ' To love God with all of our heart, strength, soul and mind. and to Love others as ourselves'