

# The Purpose and Plan for the Church Pt. 9

## Acts 2:40-47

### Acts 2:40–47

And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation.”

41 Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added *to them*.

42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

43 Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.

44 Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common,

45 and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.

46 So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart,

47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

## **Introduction:**

There are over 2,300 references to finance and money in Scripture. Many would prefer that the Bible say nothing at all on the subject because any mention of it makes them feel uncomfortable. Some are uncomfortable because they feel guilty for not being generous and for having fallen far short in financial stewardship. Others feel uncomfortable because they think the only reason why a preacher would ever bring it up is when he wants to elevate his own personal standard of living.

Then there are those who are uncomfortable because they believe that among the topics you never talk about in public, such as politics and religion, money and how we spend it is right up there at the top of the list. In other words, for these people, it's uncouth and undignified and a violation of personal boundaries to talk about finances.

There's actually another sort of Christian who gets uncomfortable when money is mentioned. They aren't necessarily derelict in their stewardship of money. They aren't necessarily stingy or suspicious of leadership in the church. Their discomfort comes from a conviction that to speak of money is evidence of a lack of faith. If we simply had enough trust in God to provide, we wouldn't need to consider those hundreds and hundreds of Bible verses that talk about money. Whatever the church needs to thrive would simply flow in effortlessly and without fanfare.

Then, of course, there are a few people in the local church who aren't bothered at all or for any reason when money is mentioned. Their response is to say: "Bring it, brother! Preach

it! Why have you waited so long and been so reluctant to speak on something so essential to Christian living?”

throughout evangelical churches in America, the average Christian gives around 2.8% of their income to the local church. 2.8%!

If this is true then we have forgotten who we are and what we should be focusing on.

## **1. Remember Everything you have and are came from God**

### **1 Co 4:7**

**7** For who makes you differ *from another*? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive *it*, why do you boast as if you had not received *it*?

## **2. Remember that You are here to glorify God and represent Christ to the World ( the greatest giver of all)**

### **1 Jn 3:16–18**

**16** By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren.

**17** But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?

**18** My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

### 3. Remember that You cannot Serve God and MONEY

#### **Mt 6:19–21,24**

**19** “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal;

**20** but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

**21** For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

**24** “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

#### **1 Ti 6:7–11**

For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out.

**8** And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.

**9** But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.

**10** For the love of money is a root of all *kinds of* evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

**11** But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.

#### **4. Remember that this is not your Home.**

##### **1 Jn 2:15–17**

**15** Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

**16** For all that *is* in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.

**17** And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

##### **Col 3:1–2**

**3:1** If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.

**2** Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

## **Review**

**I. Christ is Lord of His Church**

**II. Christ Builds His Church**

**III. Christ Plans His Church**

## **IV. Christ Gives Purpose to His Church**

Lesson:

### **I. Christ is Lord of His Church**

### **II. Christ Builds His Church**

### **III. Christ Plans His Church**

**A. Separated**

**B. Saved**

**C. Steadfast**

**D. Teaching**

**E. Fellowshiping**

**F. Celebrating Lords supper/ baptism**

**G. Praying**

**H. Giving**

# I. Praising

## J. Fearing

### 1. The Church was Separated

### 2. The Church was Saved

41 Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.

47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

### 3. The Church was steadfast.

42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

46 So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart,

v.42 And they continued steadfastly — —

**Pres Active Participle**

**46 So continuing daily — same word, and parsing**

**proskartereó: to attend constantly**

**Original Word:** ΠΡΟΣΚΑΡΤΕΡΕΩ

**Part of Speech:** Verb

**Transliteration:** proskartereó

**Phonetic Spelling:** (pros-kar-ter-eh'-o)

**Short Definition:** I persist

**Definition:** I persist, persevere in, continue steadfast in; I wait upon.

**4342** *proskartereó* (from **4314** /*prós*, "towards, interactively *with*" and **2594** /*kartereó*, "show steadfast strength," derived from **2904** /*krátos*, "prevailing strength") – properly, to consistently showing strength which *prevails* (in spite of difficulties); to *endure* (remain firm), **staying in a fixed direction.** [**4342** /*proskartereó* means "to continue to do something with intense effort, with the possible implication of despite difficulty – 'to devote oneself to, to keep on, to persist in'"

## 4. The Church was Teaching

42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine

**continued steadfastly**

**προσκαρτερέω** (4342)

*verb: present, active, participle, nominative, plural, masculine*

- 1 to adhere to one, be his adherent, to be devoted or constant to one
- 2 to be steadfastly attentive unto, to give unremitting care to a thing
- 3 to continue all the time in a place
- 4 to persevere and not to faint



doctrine

**διδασχῆ** (1322)

*noun: dative, singular, feminine*

- 1 teaching
  - 1 that which is taught
  - 2 doctrine, teaching, concerning something
- 2 the act of teaching, instruction
  - 1 in religious assemblies of the Christians, to speak in the way of teaching, in distinction from other modes of speaking in public

## 5. The Church was Fellowshiping

42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship,  
fellowship

**κοινωνία** (2842)

*noun: dative, singular, feminine*

[Find all occurrences \(approximately 18\)](#)

- 1 fellowship, association, community, communion, joint participation, intercourse
  - 1 the share which one has in anything, participation
  - 2 intercourse, fellowship, intimacy
    - 1 the right hand as a sign and pledge of fellowship (in fulfilling the apostolic office)
  - 3 a gift jointly contributed, a collection, a contribution, as exhibiting an embodiment and proof of fellowship

## 6. Celebrating the Lord's Table and Baptism

41 Then those who gladly received his word **were baptized;** and that day about three thousand souls were added *to them*.

42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, **in the breaking of bread,** and in prayers.

## 7. The Church was Praying

42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

## 8. The Church was Giving

44 Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common,

45 and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.

### NASB

45 and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.

### sold their possessions and goods

**πράω** (4097)

*verb: imperfect, active, indicative, 3rd, plural*

[Find all occurrences \(approximately 9\)](#)

- 1 to sell
  - 1 of price, one into slavery
  - 2 of the master to whom one is sold as a slave
- 2 metaph.
  - 1 sold under sin, entirely under the control of the love of sinning

### divided them

**διαμερίζω** (1266)

*verb: imperfect, active, indicative, 3rd, plural*

[Find all occurrences \(approximately 11\)](#)

- 1 to cleave asunder, cut in pieces
- 2 to be divided into opposing parts, to be at variance, in dissension
- 3 to distribute

**Verse 45.** *And sold.* That is, they sold as much as was necessary in order to procure the means of providing for the wants of each other.

*Possessions.* Property, particularly real estate. This word \~kthmata\~ refers, properly, to their *fixed* property, as lands, houses, vineyards, etc. The word rendered *goods*, \~uparxeiv\~, refers to their personal or movable property.

*And parted them to all.* They *distributed* them to supply the wants of their poorer brethren, according to their necessities.

*As every man had need.* This expression *limits* and fixes the meaning of what is said before. The passage does not mean that they sold *all* their possessions, or that they relinquished their title to all their property; but that they so far regarded all as common as to be willing to part with it IF it was needful to supply the wants of the others. Hence the property was laid at the disposal of the apostles, and they were desired to distribute it freely to meet the wants of the poor, Acts 4:34,35. This was an important incident in the early propagation of religion; and it may suggest many useful reflections.

(1.) We see the effect of religion. The love of property is one of the strongest affections which men have. There is nothing that will overcome it but religion. That will; and one of the *first* effects of the gospel was to loosen the hold of Christians on property.

(2.) It is the duty of the church to provide for the wants of its poor and needy members. There can be no doubt that property should now be regarded as *so far* common as that the wants of the poor should be supplied by those who are rich. Comp. Matthew 26:11.

Verse 44 is not prescribing communal living for God's people in every situation. The Bible recognizes the right to personal property and the need for families to be distinct.

The situation in Jerusalem was somewhat unique. Thousands of pilgrims had traveled there for the Feast of Pentecost. Many had been saved after Peter's message, and they wanted to stay longer to get grounded in their new faith. They needed hospitality and financial help to do this. To meet these needs, the church opened their homes and their pocketbooks to help the needy. Some even sold land and donated the proceeds, although this was not required (4:37; 5:1, 4).

## 1 Co 16:1-2

- 1 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also:
- 2 On the first *day* of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.

### **1. The purpose of giving.**

that giving is for the saints. That we as believers have a primary responsibility to give to the needs of other believers whether they are spiritual or physical. We are to invest so that the believers may have their needs met. We are to give to each other. We are to have all things in common like the early church. We are to share everything freely that we possess. We really don't own anything. We just hold it in trust and if somebody else needs it more than we do, then it's theirs. Whatever it is. So we are to share.

The purpose of giving then is to direct itself at the saints.

that means it's the saints in need = individuals need  
it's the saints who lead. to the church Leadership

But we are to give to meet the needs of the church, the saints, the believing community, whether their needs are physical or spiritual. Maybe we're giving so that we can provide food for their soul as well as food for their body.

### **2 The period for giving.**

2 On the first *day* of the week

We are to deal with stewardship weekly. We are to face the reality of giving weekly. God doesn't want us to store it up until

some forgotten tomorrow. God wants us to be giving on a constant systematic week by week basis so that we're always facing the reality of stewardship.

### 3. The place of giving.

The place of giving, I believe, is to be the church. I think that's what Paul is saying here and want to show you why.

2 On the first *day* of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper

How are we to give? Are we just to keep a little bank account and dole out money to the needs as we see them? Are we to give our money to various and sundry organizations? Are we actually to bring all of our money just dump it in the church and let the church decide?

Well, since as early as the second and third century, after the church began, there have been some commentators who interpreted this as a private personal account in the home or a private bank.

I believe this text is teaching us that we are to place our money in the church primarily. This is to be the primary pattern of giving that Paul is seeking here. Now let me show you why I say that. And there are several reasons.

From the earliest years of the church it was the pattern of giving that the saints would take their monies and they would give them to the church leaders and the church leaders would distribute them. So that giving in a sense was indirect to the need. The church leaders would determine the needs. The church leaders

would distribute to meet the needs rather than every individual simply giving money to whatever and whenever, wherever he wanted.

- 34** Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold,  
**35** and laid *them* at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.  
**36** And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus,  
**37** having land, sold *it*, and brought the money and laid *it* at the apostles' feet.

- 5:1** But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession.  
**2** And he kept back *part* of the proceeds, his wife also being aware *of it*, and brought a certain part and laid *it* at the apostles' feet.

*The New King James Version. (1982). (Ac 4:34–5:2). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.*

Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar.

- 29** Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea.  
**30** This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

*The New King James Version*. (1982). (Ac 11:28–12:1). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Now there you have the common practice of the early church. It was to make a central distribution point being the leaders of the church who would then disseminate the funds to the area of need. Now the reason I say that is because there is no statement anywhere at all in the New Testament about keeping private funds. That is not common to the early church. We can't find any indication of such practice. But rather it was deposited in the care of those who were in spiritual responsibility and done so on a week to week basis on the first day of the week and those spiritually minded men determined the distribution of said funds.

To lay by himself simply means that each individual by himself in a very personal and a very private kind of way is to set aside this giving. In other words, the by himself doesn't mean beside himself in his house. It means that he is to determine this by himself. This is a private personal thing. In other words, nobody's going to tell you how much to set aside, how much to invest with God, how much to give, that is something you determine by yourself and then you lay it in store.

Now what does it mean to lay it in store?

the Greek word, thesauridso, from which we get Thesaurus,

There's a book called a Thesaurus which is a treasury of words.

The word means treasury. It could mean treasury, it could mean money box, it could mean a chest, it could mean a warehouse, it could mean a chamber. It has a lot of meanings, but it's where you put treasure. It's where you put valuables.



In the early years of the pagan temples in Greece and in the Roman world, the pagans would give their money and their offerings at the pagan temples. And all the pagan temples had what were known as thesaurus or the treasure boxes. And people would come with their money and place it in the thesaurus, the treasury of the temple. This was true in Judaism,  
The temple treasury,

This was true in many pagan religions. In fact, it got to be so that the temple actually would come to the place where it would not only receive the gifts of the people, but it would even hold their money for them. So that temples...pagan temples became banks. The biggest banks in the Greek world were in temples. And the reason because the people worshiped the gods they worshiped out of fear and nobody would rob the temple bank. Safest place to put a bank.

They actually had safe deposit boxes that you could have for your own deposit and so forth. So the idea in terms of the cultural background is of a treasury associated with the meeting place or the place of worship. The idea of the term simply means to set by yourself privately and devoting your own thinking and self-determination to the determining of whatever amount you're going to give and to place it in the treasury. Now the use of the term treasury in that world would have commonly brought to their mind the treasury at the house of worship. So it seems best to see that the phrase is simply saying put your money in the treasury and they would know that the treasury would be that which was common to their place of worship.

#### **4. The participants in giving.**

2 On the first *day* of the week let each one of you lay something aside,

Nobody's exempt. Some people might say well, I can't give money so I'll give my talent. No, no, no, everybody.. every one of you is to take this systematically week in and week out and to place it in the treasury of the church for distribution to the needs of the saints. It's a matter of stewardship.

Every one of you say well, I'm very poor. Well, if you have anything, you have something to give, right? If you have anything, you have something to give.

Mark 12:41

- 41** Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many *who were* rich put in much.
- 42** Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans. (1/64 days wage)
- 43** So He called His disciples to *Himself* and said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury;
- 44** for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood."

You know what, she gave A hundred percent. If you have anything, you have something to give.

You know, it's like the guy was saying to his friend if you had two farms would you give one to the Lord? Yes. If you had two fields, would you give one to the Lord? Yes. If you had two pigs would you give one to the Lord? Now you know I have two pigs.

**Luke 16:10** "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much. And he that is unjust in the least is also unjust in the much."

If you haven't been faithful in the unrighteous money, who will commit to your trust the true riches?" In other words, if you can't prove yourself when you're poor, being rich isn't going to change your spirituality. Being rich just compounds your problem. If you can't trust God when you're poor, believe me it's going to be tough when you're rich and you've got all the resources you need apart from Him.

## 5. The proportions of giving.

2 On the first *day* of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper,

I find this very interesting

1. Paul says lay something Aside
2. as he may prosper
3. Paul does not mention the tithe  
in fact anytime Paul brings up giving to the church he NEVER mentions the tithe.

WHY?

1. The Tithe was an O.T. Temple Tax. In fact the Israelites actually paid 2 tithes every year and then they paid another Tithe every 3rd year so that the total worked out to be 23 1/3 % every year that was required payment

to the Temple and Priesthood of Israel. This was before any of the free will offering.

The Tithe was part of the required giving of the OT.

So Why then do so many who want to support giving to the Church go to Malachi and preach bring all the tithes into the store house. That was the Temple in Israel, not the church. and was a requirement by Law.

So what does God expect. 10, 20, 30, 35 %  
Well listen to these verses

1st Consider these verses

### **Pr 3:9–10**

- 9** Honor the Lord with your possessions,  
And with the firstfruits of all your increase;  
**10** So your barns will be filled with plenty,  
And your vats will overflow with new wine.

### **Pr 14:31**

- 31** He who oppresses the poor reproaches his Maker,  
But he who honors Him has mercy on the needy.

### **Pr 11:24–26**

- 24** There is *one* who scatters, yet increases more;

And there is *one* who withholds more than is right,  
But it *leads* to poverty.

- 25** The generous soul will be made rich,  
And he who waters will also be watered himself.
- 26** The people will curse him who withholds grain,  
But blessing *will be* on the head of him who sells *it*.

## **Proverbs 19:17 (NKJV)**

- <sup>17</sup> He who has pity on the poor lends to the Lord,  
And He will pay back what he has given.

## **2 Co 9:5–11**

- 5** Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren to go to you ahead of time, and prepare your generous gift beforehand, which *you had* previously promised, that it may be ready as *a matter of* generosity and not as a grudging obligation.
- 6** But this *I say*: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.
- 7** So let each one *give* as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.
- 8** And God *is* able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all *things*, may have an abundance for every good work.
- 9** As it is written:  
*“He has dispersed abroad,*

*He has given to the poor;  
His righteousness endures forever.”*

- 10** Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness,
- 11** while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God.

John MacArthur states

How much are we to give?

Well, the common answer is you've got to ten percent. Is that right? Is that what we're to give? Well, let's find out by looking at some biblical thoughts about this. If you look back at the time before Moses, that's a block of time from Adam to Moses, then from Moses to Christ, then from Christ to now. And those are the three great periods of history we'll examine in our thinking.

Prior to Moses what was the giving pattern? Well, some people say well, they gave a tenth. Abram gave a tenth to Melchizedek. Jacob gave a tenth to the Lord in Genesis. And they're right. So they say, you see the tenth was before the mosaic law, so it must supersede the mosaic law and still be in vogue so the tenth is the pattern. But what's interesting about that is to go back and to study, in fact, the time before Moses. You know what you find out. That it's right. Abram gave a tenth and Jacob gave a tenth. But you know what's interesting about that? Abram gave a tenth

one time in his whole life and he lived over 160 years. And never do we have record that he ever gave that much or that amount again.

Jacob did it once and beyond that, those are the only two who ever did it. And you have myriads and myriads and myriads of offerings given in that time. From Cain and Abel's first offering all the way through, all of the offerings ever given, you only have two times when they were a tenth and in neither case was the tenth commanded and in neither case was the tenth binding and neither case did the tenth maintain itself as a standard of giving beyond the point that which it was given at that time.

And you might be interested to know that giving a tenth was a common practice among the pagans. Because basic counting is done in increments of ten because of our fingers and our toes. People have always counted that way and ten has been always the symbol of fullness. So when a pagan would want to offer something to a god, he would give a tenth of it because that symbolized the total. That symbolized the totality. And Abram on his own volition simply chose to do that. In fact, it says in Hebrews that he gave a tenth of the top of the heap. So it may not have been a tenth of the whole of the spoils he gained, but just a tenth of the top of the heap. The best of the spoils. You remember he won a battle against five kings and he wanted to thank God somehow for the victory and then he met this man named Melchizedek who was a priest of God, a priest long before the Levitical priesthood. Just a priest, a unique Godly man and to show his love for God and his thanks, he made an offering to this priest, which was fine. And the tenth was simply arbitrary in his heart. That's what he chose to do.

And later Jacob's one time act was even an act of sin, because he was giving a tenth as a pagan would to try to bribe God. Apart from that you have no indication that it was ever commanded, ever prescribed or ever demanded. You say well, then do you have required giving in that period of time? Yes, you do. In

Genesis 41 and in Chapter 47. In those two chapters which we won't take time to study, but in those two chapters God required giving. You know what He said? He said that the inhabitation of Egypt, He said, there's going to be a famine, right? Remember that? Seven years of plenty, seven years of famine. He said in order to provide for that and in order to take care of the needs of the people, command every individual to give one-fifth of all that he has. What percent is that? Twenty percent.

So God laid out 20% as a standard of giving for one reason, taxation. He was funding the government of Egypt to meet the needs of its people. That was the only indication of a prescription ever given in the pre-mosaic time. That was the only time an amount was ever prescribed. All other offerings were completely free will, free choice, give whatever you please. The only time God ever laid it out was in taxation of the government on the people to provide for its needs.

Now let's move into the time of Moses. You say what happened in the time of Moses? Bet He sure got it there. Yes, but you know something very interesting, listen to this. In Leviticus 27, God said, "Here's my law. You give a tenth of everything you have and it goes to the Levites." You know who the Levites were? They were the priests. Now watch, He says, "You give it to the Levites, they are the priests." Well, Israel, if you'll remember, was what's called a theocracy, not a democracy, but a theocracy. That is God ruled. And God ruled in Israel through leaders. And the leaders were the priests. The priests were the Senators and the Congressmen and the Presidents and the Governors and the Mayors and all the other judges and everything else, the priests took all those roles so they were the public servants.

And the tenth that was paid as the Levites tax was to pay the salaries of the public servants. Beloved, it was not free will giving, it was taxation again. Do you understand that? It was to fund the government. Then in Deuteronomy Chapter 12, they were required to give another ten percent every year and this was to go



for the funding of the national holidays and the national feasts and so forth. And this was to take care of national unity and national religion. So that you had ten percent every year and another ten percent every year and then in Deuteronomy 12, there was a third ten percent that was to go to the poor and that was welfare and that was required every third year. So ten percent, ten percent, and three and a third were annual funding for the government. Now listen, the tithe is related to that. It never was related to freewill giving. It never was related to spontaneous giving. It never is that thing that comes out of the heart to the Lord. It was required taxation. And in Malachi 3 when it says "Bring your tithe and offerings into the storehouse, it is..." the word for storehouse in the Hebrew there is the temple treasury. Pay your taxes he's saying. Now notice the tithe in the Old Testament was not freewill giving to God out of love. It was pay your taxes. You say well, John, where was the giving then? Where was the free giving? Isn't it interesting, by the way, that it was 23% or so then and it was 20% or so in the time of Egypt and what is the base of taxation today in America, 20%.

So we're not too far a field from the standard God set up a long time ago. Well, you say then, during the time you were paying the funding to the national government and paying your taxes and all in Israel, did you have any liberty to give? Where was the freewill giving? Oh, the freewill giving was there too, but that was over and above. Listen, Proverbs 3:9, Proverbs 3:9 says this, here's the pattern for giving in the Old Testament time in Moses time. Here it is, "Honor the Lord with your substance and the first fruits of all your increase so shall your barns be filled with plenty and your presses burst out with new wine." How much were they to give? Whatever you want.

Just honor the Lord and give what you want, but remember the more generous you are the better the harvest and the fatter your barn's going to be. And then over in the 11<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Proverbs you have another principle for giving. He says this, "There is he

that scatters and yet increases. He that withholds more than his fitting intends to poverty." You want to lose your money, hoard it. You want to gain, scatter it. "The liberal soul shall be made fat." That was the principle. In other words, God was saying this, look, you can give whatever you want, give the first fruits, the best you've got, give out of your substance and if you hold back, you'll tend to poverty and if you scatter it, put out a lot, God will make you rich. That was giving.

Now I'll show you an illustration of this kind of giving. Look with me and I want you to turn to these passages for just a brief moment to Exodus and I want to call your attention to Chapter...well, let's look at Chapter 25, verse 1. Now they were building the tabernacle, "and the Lord spoke to Moses and said speak to the children of Israel that they bring me an offering." Now this isn't the tithe. It's not the first ten percent, the second percent or the third ten percent, this is something they can do whatever they want. Now notice, "of every man that gives it willingly with his heart you shall take my offering." What's the standard then? Whatever you want, whatever's in your heart, whatever you're willing to do. A beautiful spirit.

That's always the way God was. God didn't tell Abram how much to give when he got joyous. He just gave what was on his heart. God didn't tell Abel what to give. He just gave what was in his heart. God didn't tell Noah what to do when he made the offering to God after the flood. He gave what was in his heart. And it's the same principle here. Now watch in Exodus 35 what happens. In Exodus 35, it's time to collect the offering. Now you've got all the instructions on the tabernacle. It's all set to go and Moses spoke to the congregation and said "this is what the Lord says." Exodus 35:5, "Take you from among you an offering to the Lord whosoever is of a willing heart. Let him bring it an offering of the Lord." Listen, God does not want you to give grudgingly or of, what, necessity. There's not any prescription beloved. He just wants you to give whatever you want to give. Whatever you're

willing to give, but He says, remember what you give, I will multiply. What you hold you won't see any multiplication on. So remember to be liberal about it. So He says, get them to bring gold, silver, bronze, blue, purple, scarlet, any old thing they want, whatever's in their heart. In verse 21 of Exodus 35, "And they came, everyone whose heart stirred him up. And everyone whom his spirit made willing. And they brought the Lord's offering to the work of the tabernacle of the congregation and for all its services and the holy garments." You see, just a matter of whatever they want.

Well, you know, how the story ended. They kept bringing so much stuff that finally they had to make an announcement. Verse 6 of Chapter 36. "And Moses gave the commandment and caused it to be announced through the camp saying, let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing for the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it and too much." Isn't that great? Boy I've often thought of the day when we come to church and say folks there will be no more offerings we have too much. But it ought to be so, you know that? It ought to be so. It was then. And they didn't need a prescription and they didn't need an amount. All they needed was a heart that was willing and a spirit that was moved and they gave, because they knew they were investing with a God who can't be out-given. Do you understand that?

Now that's always been God's pattern for giving. The only time the tenth ever came into play was in taxation, not in freewill giving. You say well, when you get into the present day, how do we view this thing? Well, what about now? We don't live in Israel. No, but we have the same two kinds of giving. And the New Testament tells us to do two things with our money, basic two obligations. One, Romans 13, verse 6, Romans 13, verse 6, "For this cause pay ye taxes." That's right. For the IRS are God's ministers. That's what it says here. It doesn't say IRS, but it

means them. "Render therefore to all their dues, pay every last dime, tribute to whom tribute due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor." Now do you see what the New Testament is saying. It's saying the same thing. You...prior in the time of Egypt, in the time of Egypt was the standard? Pay your 20% taxes to Egypt and give to God what you want. In Moses time, pay your 23 1/3 or whatever it was to Israel and give God whatever you want? Today what is it? Pay your income taxes. The United States government prescribes it, that's required giving, and give God whatever is in your heart to give. There's no tenth, there's no percent involved at all. That's up to you. But do it every week and everybody do it. And David said, "I will not give the Lord that which cost me nothing." Do it sacrificially. Do it magnanimously.