

How to Put God First



God's Plan for Your Money (Part 4)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again as we continue with our very important and practical theme for this week, "God's Plan for Your Money."

In my previous talks this week, I've shared, first of all, that God has a complete plan for your life and this complete plan includes your money. There are two essentials for finding God's plan for your life: first, surrender yourself without reservation to God for His service; second, learn to think God's way. And I've warned you that unless you meet those conditions, you may hear this talk but you will never be able to apprehend and apply the truth in it rightly until you meet those two conditions: surrendering yourself without reservation to God and learning to think God's way.

Then I shared that God's plan for our life is summed up in one beautiful word "prosperity," which covers every area—prosperity of soul, body, finances and material needs. Then a very important point, which many of us have overlooked, that our attitude to money reveals our attitude to God. Jesus said, "You cannot serve two masters. You cannot serve God and mammon, you have to make a choice." And if you serve God, you will despise mammon (that's the evil spiritual power that manipulates men and women through money).

Then I pointed out yesterday that God wants us to see our money as something holy. It's a complete mistake to think of money as something dirty or unworthy. Money is part of us. When we offer our money, we are offering a major part of ourselves to God. God wants it to be offered to Him as something holy, something that we need to offer in worship to God and also that without this our worship is not complete. God said to Israel, "No one shall appear before Me empty-handed." The psalmist said, "Bring an offering and come into God's courts and worship Him in the beauty of holiness." So, bringing an offering is essential to access to God and true worship.

Today I'm going to explain a simple way that is both practical and scriptural to put God first in handling our money. I pointed out that you have to do that—you have to seek first God's kingdom and God's righteousness, you have honor the Lord with your firstfruits (the key word is "first" all the way through). If you don't put God first, if you put money first,

then you're an idolater.

Well, today I want to explain to you a very simple, practical and scriptural way to put God first with your money. And it is: by consistently setting aside for God the first tenth of your income. And this practice is traditionally known as "tithing." Because "tithe" is the Old English word that is used in the King James version for "the tenth." So tithing is consistently setting apart for God the first tenth of your total income. And when you do that, you've laid a foundation for honoring God with your money.

Now, this practice of tithing goes all the way back to Abraham in the Bible. Some Christians think that tithing was first instituted under the law of Moses—that is not correct. It's at least four hundred years older than the Law. This is what is written in Genesis 14:18–20 about Abraham. Abraham had just won a great battle over some kings that had attacked and, in winning the battle, he'd gathered a great quantity of booty.

> "Then Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, and he blessed Abram, saying, 'Blessed be Abram by God Most High, creator of heaven and earth. And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand.'"

So Melchizedek, the priest of the Most High God, God's representative in the earth at particular time in the life of Abraham, blessed him. And now, how did Abraham respond? It says then Abraham gave Him, Melchizedek, a tenth of everything. He tithed everything that he had gained in victory to the priest of God, Melchizedek.

Now it's important to see that Abraham is presented in the New Testament as a father and a pattern to all subsequent believers. This is what Paul says in Romans 4:11–12:

> "So then, he [that's Abraham] is the father of all who believe [and then he goes on to say in the next verse:] ...he is also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised [which is at the time Melchizedek met him]."

So, in order to be children of Abraham, we have to walk in the steps of Abraham's faith and that includes handling our money the way Abraham handled his. And then it goes on in the next passage in Romans 4:16:

> "Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all."

So, Abraham is our father when we walk in the footsteps of his faith and when we have the same faith that he had and that includes his faith in the area of finance and material possessions.

And then we move on to the example of Jacob, Abraham's grandson. Genesis 28:20–22. Jacob, because of the way he had tricked Isaac, his father, and also Esau, his brother, became a refugee. He had to leave the land of inheritance and he went off to seek his fortune in Mesopotamia. And when he set out all he had in his hand was one staff. And this is what Jacob says:

> "Then Jacob made a vow, saying, 'If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear so that I return safely to my father's house, then the Lord will be my God. This stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth.'"

That's tithing again. And Jacob said, "That's the basis of my relationship with God. He provides my needs and I, in return, give Him back a tenth of all that He provides for me."

And then we read Jacob's testimony twenty years later in Genesis 32:9–10.

> "Then Jacob prayed, 'O God of my father Abraham, God of my father Isaac, O Lord, who said to me, 'Go back to your country and your relatives, and I will make you prosper,' [Notice that key word 'prosper.' Then Jacob continues:] ...I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness you have shown your servant. I had only my staff when I crossed this Jordan, but now I have become two groups [two bands].'"

He had tremendous wealth; He had a very large family; every need of his had been supplied. What was the reason? His faithfulness in tithing. He left with one staff, he came back with abundance. What's the key? He gave God the first tenth

of everything that God provided for him.

Continuing on with this record of the tithing of God's people in the Old Testament, I want to point out now that under the law of Moses, the tithe simply belonged to God—there was no question. In Leviticus 27:30 and 32, this is what the Bible says:

> "A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord; it is holy to the Lord. [Notice that word 'holy.' The tithe is holy. Verse 32:] The entire tithe of the herd and flock—every tenth animal that passes under the shepherd's rod—will be holy to the Lord."

The entire tithe is holy to the Lord. Deuteronomy 14:22, God says:

> "Be sure to set aside a tenth of all that your fields produce each year."

Set aside a tenth. That is tithing.

And then in the New Testament, and many Christians, I think, are not aware of this, tithing reappears in the priesthood of Jesus. This is unfolded in Hebrews 6, first of all, in 19–20, where it speaks about:

> "...the inner sanctuary behind the curtain [and it tells us] ...Jesus, who went before us, has entered there on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."

So Jesus is our High Priest in the order of Melchizedek.

In the next chapter of Hebrews, chapter 7, the writer goes on to explain the part that tithing played in the high priesthood of Melchizedek or in the priesthood of Melchizedek and in the high priesthood of Jesus. This is what he says in Hebrews 7:4–8:

> "Just think how great he was [that's Melchizedek]: Even the patriarch Abraham gave him a tenth of the plunder! [Now then he goes on:] Now the law requires the descendants of Levi who become priests to collect a tenth from the people [that's the tithe]—that is, their brothers—even though their brothers are descended from Abraham. This man, however, [that's Melchizedek] did not trace his descent from Levi, yet he collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed him who had the promise. [Notice the emphasis all the way through on the tenth. Then it goes on:] And without doubt the lesser person is blessed by the greater. [So Abraham was lesser than Melchizedek because he was blessed by Melchizedek. And then he concludes:] In the one case [that's the case of the Lord], the tenth is collected by men who die; but in the other case, by him who is declared to be living."

So, the priesthood of Melchizedek is an eternal priesthood. The one who was in the priesthood never dies. And it states of Jesus that He's a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, He lives forever, and in His priesthood there is included the fact that He receives the tithes of His people.

So tithing has a continuous history from Abraham onwards. From Abraham to Jacob, to Israel, and then, in the ministry of Jesus Himself, as our High Priest. When we set aside our first tenth, when we offer to Jesus our tithe, by that act we are actually acknowledging, according to Scripture, that Jesus is our High Priest according to the priesthood of Melchizedek. It's one of the ways we honor Him and acknowledge Him as our High Priest.

Well, our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll be sharing further about this time-honored practice of tithing.

Radio Program

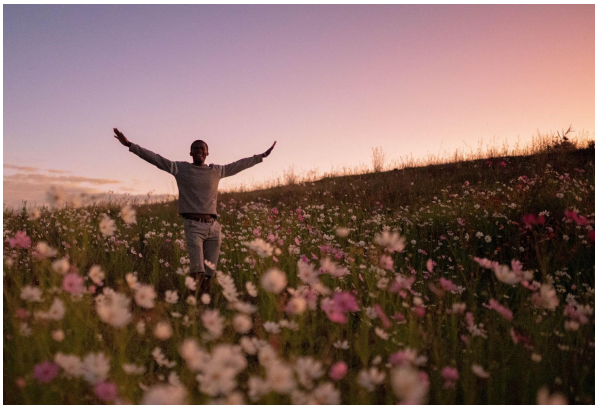
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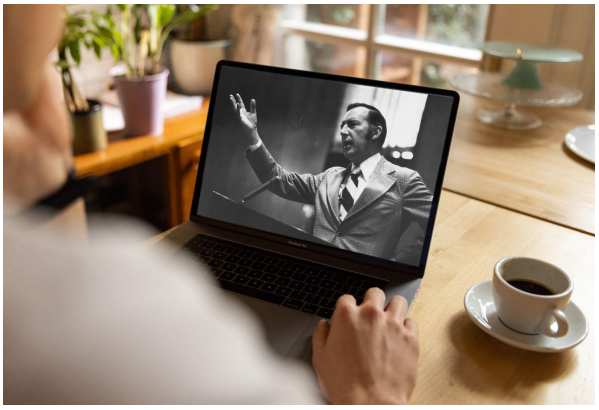
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