

# **The Power To Get Wealth**

**By Dr. Ramiz Khalaf**

*This book is dedicated to all my co-workers so that they will be aware of the important role of finances in life and godliness, in spreading God's Word, and in the wellbeing of God's church; and to all the churches with their leaders, and to all the Christian workers who set their hearts to serve God, so that they will amend their ways and walk right in the area of finances.*

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*Gratefully dedicated to my wife Violeta and to my son Isaac;  
my faithful workers in the Lord.  
Thank you for being with me and helping me to achieve,  
“As for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.”*

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## ***Introduction***

***“17 And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth. 18 But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day.” (Deuteronomy 8:17-18 KJV)***

***“17 You may say to yourself, “My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.” 18 But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today.” (Deuteronomy 8:17-18 NIV)***

Finances are one of the most crucial things in the life of individuals, families, and the church and ministry. There is a general opinion that God can work even without finances, and that is true in cases where the people involved know how to handle and deal with finances. But the view that God can work without finances will not come true if the individuals, families, or churches involved do not know how to commit their lives to God and handle their finances in the proper way. Those who know the Scripture and follow God’s statutes pertaining to finances will know and experience that God will work with them even if they start from a very low capital or even no capital at all because they know how to apply the Word of God and they know how to climb the rings of the ladder of progress in their lives.

The Lord has given us the power and the ability to possess and to retain the blessings and the wealth that He has and will give us. There is no self-righteousness or boasting about that; all what we have has come from the Lord, whether it’s finances, resources, strength, various kinds of abilities, and the wisdom from God’s Word, including our repentance and our obedience to all His instructions. ***“And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the LORD our God, as he hath commanded us.” (Deuteronomy 6:25 KJV)*** The point that I need to stress here is that we should not think that we have made ourselves wealthy, but the

Lord in His grace and mercy has granted us wealth and all what we have is from HIM.

There is a purpose for our lives; God has ordained us to live on earth for a certain period of time so that we might serve that purpose and that plan of God. There is a purpose why God has given us the power and the ability to have wealth, and that is, in order to serve Him.

In this book I am not speaking about prosperity Gospel, neither am I saying we should put our trust on finances or wealth, ***“Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.” (1 Timothy 1:17 KJV)*** But the point here is that God wants us to be a blessing to others. God’s will for us is to be good stewards of what he is giving to us so that we can be more effective in sharing the blessings and the Gospel with other people. Spiritual blessings, as well as material blessings, are required to promote the work of God and make His blessings available to others. God wants us to be more effective in using all that He is giving to us. God in His Word has principles that we must know, follow, and apply in our lives to accumulate wealth that will be used for His glory:

I am more than 50 years old, and I have passed through various stages in my life with varying levels of income and I can testify that obedience to God’s Word is crucial to maintain a balanced status of finances and to have wealth that will help us to serve God’s purpose in our lives and in the lives of the people around us, even to the next generation.

I decided to pen down what God revealed to me so that it would be a good reminder to all my co-workers and disciples, to those who love the truth, and to the next generation after my decease. I decided to put down in writing what God has revealed to me in order to impart important instructions from God’s Word about the value of finances in maintaining our mission on earth while we are waiting for Christ’s coming: ***“12 Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. 13 Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance;***

***14 Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me. 15 Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.” (2 Peter 1:12-15 KJV)***

There are noble people who lived in order to serve the purpose of God in their lives. They have pure hearts and have no greed or want for dishonest gain: ***“Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.” (Exodus 18:21 KJV)*** ***“He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil.” (Isaiah 33:15 KJV)*** Those with noble hearts will be established by God, and God will bless them with financial wealth so that they can continue to pursue and achieve God’s plans.

On the other end of the spectrum, there are those who have wrong motives and use ministry for dishonest gain, or for personal gain, ***“and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward.” (Jude 1:11 KJV)*** ***“Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering, which I have commanded in my habitation; and honourest thy sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people?” (1 Samuel 2:29 KJV)*** ***“Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.” (1 Timothy 6:5 KJV)***

We need to teach and expound these things to our disciples and discipline our workers so they might obtain perfect hearts with regard to finances so that their service and ministry would be acceptable to the Lord and they would be rewarded by Him. Fearing God and walking according to His Word and in His ways is the power to produce wealth that will provide us, our families, our churches, and ministries the sufficient finances to live for the glory of God and to serve Him.



# Chapter One

## *God Is Not Against Our Having Wealth*

*“For wisdom is a defence, and money is a defence: but the excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom giveth life to them that have it.” (Ecclesiastes 7:12 KJV)*

*“A feast is made for laughter, and wine maketh merry: but money answereth all things.”  
(Ecclesiastes 10:19 KJV)*

God is not against having riches and wealth as some think. God has given His people wealth that they can use and spend when required. There are some who have the opinion that men of God or people of God should not have much wealth. But that is not what the Scripture shows, as well as there are times when we may need to mobilize large amounts of money to further the fulfillment of God’s plan so that He can be honored and glorified.

How could Abraham have been able to fulfill God’s will and buy the field of Machpelah for burial if he hadn’t any money?

*“7 And Abraham stood up, and bowed himself to the people of the land, even to the children of Heth.8 And he communed with them, saying, If it be your mind that I should bury my dead out of my sight; hear me, and intreat for me to Ephron the son of Zohar,9 That he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he hath, which is in the end of his field; for as much money as it is worth he shall give it me for a possession of a buryingplace amongst you.10 And Ephron dwelt among the children of Heth: and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the audience of the children of Heth, even of all that went in at the gate of his city, saying,11 Nay, my lord, hear me: the field give I thee, and the cave that is therein, I give it thee; in the presence of the sons of my people give I it thee: bury thy dead.12 And Abraham bowed down himself before the people of the land.13 And he spake unto Ephron in the audience of the people of*

*the land, saying, But if thou wilt give it, I pray thee, hear me: I will give thee money for the field; take it of me, and I will bury my dead there.14 And Ephron answered Abraham, saying unto him, 15 My lord, hearken unto me: the land is worth four hundred shekels of silver; what is that betwixt me and thee? bury therefore thy dead.16 And Abraham hearkened unto Ephron; and Abraham weighed to Ephron the silver, which he had named in the audience of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, current money with the merchant.17 And the field of Ephron which was in Machpelah, which was before Mamre, the field, and the cave which was therein, and all the trees that were in the field, that were in all the borders round about, were made sure 18 Unto Abraham for a possession in the presence of the children of Heth, before all that went in at the gate of his city.” (Genesis 23:7-18 KJV)* It wouldn't have been right for Abraham to take the land for free without paying for it. It would have been regarded as a favor from a non-believer and Abraham would not have accepted that.

When we pay, we show integrity, and we honor God. In paying for what we need, glory will go to God Who has provided us everything we need, including finances for life and godliness.

How would Jacob have been able to buy food from Egypt for his family during the time of famine if he had had no money?

*“1 Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said unto his sons, Why do ye look one upon another?2 And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live, and not die.3 And Joseph's ten brethren went down to buy corn in Egypt.” (Genesis 42:1-3 KJV)* *“1 And the famine was sore in the land.2 And it came to pass, when they had eaten up the corn which they had brought out of Egypt, their father said unto them, Go again, buy us a little food.” (Genesis 43:1-2 KJV)*

How would the Israelites have been able to offer to God for the construction of the tabernacle at the time of Moses if they had not kept what God had given them before they left Egypt?

*“2 Speak now in the ears of the people, and let every man borrow of his neighbour, and every woman of her neighbour, jewels of silver and jewels of gold. 3 And the LORD gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of the people.” (Exodus 11:2-3 KJV)*

*“35 And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses; and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: 36 And the LORD gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them such things as they required. And they spoiled the Egyptians.” (Exodus 12:35-36 KJV)*

*“4 And Moses spake unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying, This is the thing which the LORD commanded, saying, 5 Take ye from among you an offering unto the LORD: whosoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it, an offering of the LORD; gold, and silver, and brass, 6 And blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair, 7 And rams' skins dyed red, and badgers' skins, and shittim wood, 8 And oil for the light, and spices for anointing oil, and for the sweet incense, 9 And onyx stones, and stones to be set for the ephod, and for the breastplate.” (Exodus 35:4-9 KJV)*

How would Boaz have been able to buy Naomi's parcel of land and possess Ruth as his wife if he didn't have the money?

*“9 And Boaz said unto the elders, and unto all the people, Ye are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi. 10 Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place: ye are witnesses this day.” (Ruth 4:9-10 KJV)*

The men who joined David and supported him as king after Saul, as God had ordained, wouldn't have been able to assist him and serve God with him if they hadn't been able to sustain themselves.

*“1 Now these are they that came to David to Ziklag, while he yet kept himself close because of Saul the son of Kish: and they were among the mighty men, helpers of the war. 2 They were armed with bows, and could use both the right hand and the left in hurling stones and shooting arrows out of a bow, even of Saul's brethren of Benjamin. 3 The chief was Ahiezer, then Joash, the sons of Shemaah the Gibeathite; and Jeziel, and Pelet, the sons of Azmaveth; and Berachah, and Jehu the Antothite. 4 And Ismaiah the Gibeonite, a mighty man among the thirty, and over the thirty; and Jeremiah, and Jahaziel, and Johanan, and Josabad the Gederathite, 5 Eluzai, and Jerimoth, and Bealiah, and Shemariah, and Shephatiah the Haruphite, 6 Elkanah, and Jesiah, and Azareel, and Joezer, and Jashobeam, the Korhites, 7 And Joelah, and Zebadiah, the sons of Jeroham of Gedor. 8 And of the Gadites there separated themselves unto David into the hold to the wilderness men of might, and men of war fit for the battle, that could handle shield and buckler, whose faces were like the faces of lions, and were as swift as the roes upon the mountains; 9 Ezer the first, Obadiah the second, Eliab the third, 10 Mishmannah the fourth, Jeremiah the fifth, 11 Attai the sixth, Eliel the seventh, 12 Johanan the eighth, Elzabad the ninth, 13 Jeremiah the tenth, Machbanai the eleventh. 14 These were of the sons of Gad, captains of the host: one of the least was over an hundred, and the greatest over a thousand. 15 These are they that went over Jordan in the first month, when it had overflowed all his banks; and they put to flight all them of the valleys, both toward the east, and toward the west. 16 And there came of the children of Benjamin and Judah to the hold unto David. 17 And David went out to meet them, and answered and said unto them, If ye be come peaceably unto me to help me, mine heart shall be knit unto you: but if ye be come to betray me to mine enemies, seeing there is no wrong in mine hands, the God of our fathers look thereon, and rebuke it. 18 Then the spirit came upon Amasai, who was chief of the captains, and he said, Thine are we, David, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse: peace, peace be unto thee, and peace be to thine helpers; for thy God helpeth thee. Then David received them, and made them captains of the band. 19 And there fell some of Manasseh to David, when he came with the Philistines against Saul to battle: but they helped them not: for the lords of the Philistines upon advisement sent him away,*

saying, *He will fall to his master Saul to the jeopardy of our heads.* 20 *As he went to Ziklag, there fell to him of Manasseh, Adnah, and Jozabad, and Jediahel, and Michael, and Jozabad, and Elihu, and Zilthai, captains of the thousands that were of Manasseh.* 21 *And they helped David against the band of the rovers: for they were all mighty men of valour, and were captains in the host.* 22 *For at that time day by day there came to David to help him, until it was a great host, like the host of God.* 23 *And these are the numbers of the bands that were ready armed to the war, and came to David to Hebron, to turn the kingdom of Saul to him, according to the word of the LORD.* 24 *The children of Judah that bare shield and spear were six thousand and eight hundred, ready armed to the war.* 25 *Of the children of Simeon, mighty men of valour for the war, seven thousand and one hundred.* 26 *Of the children of Levi four thousand and six hundred.* 27 *And Jehoiada was the leader of the Aaronites, and with him were three thousand and seven hundred;* 28 *And Zadok, a young man mighty of valour, and of his father's house twenty and two captains.* 29 *And of the children of Benjamin, the kindred of Saul, three thousand: for hitherto the greatest part of them had kept the ward of the house of Saul.* 30 *And of the children of Ephraim twenty thousand and eight hundred, mighty men of valour, famous throughout the house of their fathers.* 31 *And of the half tribe of Manasse eighteen thousand, which were expressed by name, to come and make David king.* 32 *And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do; the heads of them were two hundred; and all their brethren were at their commandment.* 33 *Of Zebulun, such as went forth to battle, expert in war, with all instruments of war, fifty thousand, which could keep rank: they were not of double heart.* 34 *And of Naphtali a thousand captains, and with them with shield and spear thirty and seven thousand.* 35 *And of the Danites expert in war twenty and eight thousand and six hundred.* 36 *And of Asher, such as went forth to battle, expert in war, forty thousand.* 37 *And on the other side of Jordan, of the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and of the half tribe of Manasseh, with all manner of instruments of war for the battle, an hundred and twenty thousand.* 38 *All these men of war, that could keep rank, came with a perfect heart to Hebron, to make David king over all Israel: and all the rest also of Israel were of one heart to make David king.* 39 *And there*

*they were with David three days, eating and drinking: for their brethren had prepared for them. 40 Moreover they that were nigh them, even unto Issachar and Zebulun and Naphtali, brought bread on asses, and on camels, and on mules, and on oxen, and meat, meal, cakes of figs, and bunches of raisins, and wine, and oil, and oxen, and sheep abundantly: for there was joy in Israel.” (1 Chronicles 12:1-40 KJV)* From the above passage we can learn and conclude some important points:

**A. They were armed:** *“They were among the mighty men, helpers of the war. 2 They were armed with bows, and could use both the right hand and the left in hurling stones and shooting arrows out of a bow,” “24 The children of Judah that bare shield and spear were six thousand and eight hundred, ready armed to the war.” “34 And of Naphtali a thousand captains, and with them with shield and spear thirty and seven thousand.” “37 And on the other side of Jordan, of the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and of the half tribe of Manasseh, with all manner of instruments of war for the battle, an hundred and twenty thousand.” (1 Chronicles 12:1-2, 24, 34, 37 KJV)* The Lord had given those people a number of skills and they were mighty men and helpers to David. They were also armed. They had their own bows, shields and spears, and the rest of the instruments of war. God, who gave them skills, also gave them the instruments needed to do the ministry. There are people and churches contacting me and wanting to join the church ministry. They are extremely talented and highly skilled but when I start to communicate with them, I find that they are after material things and monetary benefits. So I conclude that they are joining the Church of God to fulfill a wrong motive. Such people and ministries or churches will never be a blessing to the church. They are parasitic and are bad testimonies to others who will instigate others to abuse the church resources.

**B. They were healthy and well provided for:** *“Whose faces were like the faces of lions, and were as swift as the roes upon the mountains.” (1 Chronicles 12:8 KJV)* Workers, who truly want to serve, do enjoy good health and are provided for by God. There are churches who communicate with me and when I begin to send them teaching, to direct them to do what is right, they ask me to send them food to eat. God’s servants will not die because of hunger. If they are threatened

with scarcity and hunger, it means that God is judging their sins. Now those workers and churches, who ask for food to feed them, need repentance more than food and drink, and we need to teach them to rely on God and receive His blessing. The very same people pretend that they are caring for orphans and widows, but, in reality, rob the orphans of the food that is due to them and enlarge their own granary.

I am not saying that we should not help the poor. I don't mean that at all. We are recommended to help the poor and to feed the hungry. We need to keep a portion for the poor, ***“Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.”*** (Galatians 2:10 KJV) ***“33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. 34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: 36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. 37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? 38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? 39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? 40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”*** (Matthew 25:33-40 KJV) Jesus said, ***“For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always.”*** (John 12:8 KJV) ***“For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor.”*** (John 13:29 KJV) We need to help the poor who are among us and do our part towards them as we are doing to the Lord. But those who want to join the church just to be fed are dishonest when they can earn their own living. Therefore, we need to consider how to direct them to Christ. Once time I receive an email from a young minister who invited me to preach in a crusade. I thanked him for his invitation and told him that I needed to hear the voice of God to accept it. We kept communication and I made him understand that my focus is not only on evangelism but in discipling people based on Scriptures. I sent articles and teachings to him. At the

same time this man was also in connection and communication with other ministries. When the time drew near and I was not involving myself with the crusade, he told me to send in my contribution. I sent him one of my books to read and study in order for him to be acquainted with the way we do our ministry. When he replied that he could translate it, I told him to read it first and discuss it with me to clarify points that he was unable to understand before he translated it. That was the last time I heard from him. He was willing to translate the book but he was not willing to read and study it. He wanted to translate it in order to ask for finances. The point that I want to tell is that those who come and ask for food and money have what they need. They just want the easy way out by taking advantage of others all in the name of serving God. It will be most detrimental to include such people in the church and give them a role to play in the ministry, which I believe will ultimately enable corruption to seep into the church.

**C. *They did not come to betray:*** We really need to wait upon God to bring the right people to be a part of the ministry as in the case of King David who built a mighty army of Godly men. ***“For at that time day by day there came to David to help him, until it was a great host, like the host of God.” (1 Chronicles 12:22 KJV)*** If we will not wait upon God, but do our own, we will certainly be trapped by wrong people who will betray us. But if we wait upon God to bring to us the right people, they will be an asset to the church ministry in church building and discipling and they will bring peace. ***“17 And David went out to meet them, and answered and said unto them, If ye be come peaceably unto me to help me, mine heart shall be knit unto you: but if ye be come to betray me to mine enemies, seeing there is no wrong in mine hands, the God of our fathers look thereon, and rebuke it. 18 Then the spirit came upon Amasai, who was chief of the captains, and he said, Thine are we, David, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse: peace, peace be unto thee, and peace be to thine helpers; for thy God helpeth thee. Then David received them, and made them captains of the band.” (1 Chronicles 12:17-18 KJV)***

**D. *They came and they knew what they needed to do:*** They came to turn the kingdom of Saul to David. Their mind was clear and they were fully oriented about the vision of God: ***“And these are the***



*numbers of the bands that were ready armed to the war, and came to David to Hebron, to turn the kingdom of Saul to him, according to the word of the LORD. (1 Chronicles 12:23 KJV)* The Church of God will be advancing with those who are sent by God to the church to serve and not merely to gratify their flesh.

*E. They have an understanding of the times: “And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do; the heads of them were two hundred; and all their brethren were at their commandment.” (1 Chronicles 12: 32 KJV)* When we wait upon God, He will give us people who will aid us in taking the right decision in every circumstance. If people with wrong priorities and motives join the church, they will continue to confuse us with their wrong suggestions and feelings and try to squeeze out money from the treasury of the church to give vent to their wrong motives and purposes.

*F. They came with a perfect heart: “Of Zebulun, such as went forth to battle, expert in war, with all instruments of war, fifty thousand, which could keep rank: they were not of double heart. 38 All these men of war, that could keep rank, came with a perfect heart to Hebron, to make David king over all Israel: and all the rest also of Israel were of one heart to make David king.” (1 Chronicles 12: 33 KJV)* They were in need of a right leader to lead them and to achieve the purpose of God in their lives. They recognized David as ordained and anointed by God, to be their leader.

*G. They were responsible to fund their journey and their staying: “39 And there they were with David three days, eating and drinking: for their brethren had prepared for them. 40 Moreover they that were nigh them, even unto Issachar and Zebulun and Naphtali, brought bread on asses, and on camels, and on mules, and on oxen, and meat, meal, cakes of figs, and bunches of raisins, and wine, and oil, and oxen, and sheep abundantly: for there was joy in Israel.” (1 Chronicles 12:39-40 KJV)* When God would bring us the right people, they will be responsible for their own expenditure. I don't mean that we should not support their trips or staying expenses, but they should be responsible enough to spend out of what God had provided.

How was Barzilli with Shobi the son of Nahash of Rabbah and Machir the son of Ammiel of Lodebar able to support King David when he fled from Absalom if they did not save enough supply? *“27 And it came to pass, when David was come to Mahanaim, that Shobi the son of Nahash of Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and Machir the son of Ammiel of Lodebar, and Barzillai the Gileadite of Rogelim, 28 Brought beds, and basons, and earthen vessels, and wheat, and barley, and flour, and parched corn, and beans, and lentiles, and parched pulse, 29 And honey, and butter, and sheep, and cheese of kine, for David, and for the people that were with him, to eat: for they said, The people is hungry, and weary, and thirsty, in the wilderness.” (2 Samuel 17:27-29 KJV)*

How would Solomon have been able to build the Temple of God in Jerusalem without the finances that his father David and the leaders of Israel had saved, collected, and provided?

David bought the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite to build an altar to the Lord in obedience to the command of God:

*“18 Then the angel of the LORD commanded Gad to say to David, that David should go up, and set up an altar unto the LORD in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite. 19 And David went up at the saying of Gad, which he spake in the name of the LORD. 20 And Ornan turned back, and saw the angel; and his four sons with him hid themselves. Now Ornan was threshing wheat. 21 And as David came to Ornan, Ornan looked and saw David, and went out of the threshingfloor, and bowed himself to David with his face to the ground. 22 Then David said to Ornan, Grant me the place of this threshingfloor, that I may build an altar therein unto the LORD: thou shalt grant it me for the full price: that the plague may be stayed from the people. 23 And Ornan said unto David, Take it to thee, and let my lord the king do that which is good in his eyes: lo, I give thee the oxen also for burnt offerings, and the threshing instruments for wood, and the wheat for the meat offering; I give it all. 24 And king David said to Ornan, Nay; but I will verily buy it for the full price: for I will not take that which is thine for the LORD, nor offer burnt offerings without cost. 25 So David gave to Ornan for the place six hundred shekels of gold by weight. 26 And David built there an altar*

*unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and called upon the LORD; and he answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt offering. 27 And the LORD commanded the angel; and he put up his sword again into the sheath thereof. 28 At that time when David saw that the LORD had answered him in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite, then he sacrificed there.” (1 Chronicles 21:18-28 KJV)* David refused to take the place without payment.

That place ultimately became the house of God and the altar became the altar of the burnt offering:

*“Then David said, This is the house of the LORD God, and this is the altar of the burnt offering for Israel.” (1 Chronicles 22:1 KJV)*

David had prepared the following for the house of God:

*“3 And David prepared iron in abundance for the nails for the doors of the gates, and for the joinings; and brass in abundance without weight; 4 Also cedar trees in abundance: for the Zidonians and they of Tyre brought much cedar wood to David.” (1 Chronicles 21:3-4 KJV)*

*“Now, behold, in my trouble I have prepared for the house of the LORD an hundred thousand talents of gold, and a thousand thousand talents of silver; and of brass and iron without weight; for it is in abundance: timber also and stone have I prepared; and thou mayest add thereto.” (1 Chronicles 21:14 KJV)*

*“2 Now I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God the gold for things to be made of gold, and the silver for things of silver, and the brass for things of brass, the iron for things of iron, and wood for things of wood; onyx stones, and stones to be set, glistening stones, and of divers colours, and all manner of precious stones, and marble stones in abundance. 3 Moreover, because I have set my affection to the house of my God, I have of mine own proper good, of gold and silver, which I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house. 4 Even three thousand talents of gold, of the gold of Ophir, and seven*

*thousand talents of refined silver, to overlay the walls of the houses withal: 5 The gold for things of gold, and the silver for things of silver, and for all manner of work to be made by the hands of artificers. And who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the LORD?” (1 Chronicles 29:2-5 KJV)*

The chief of the fathers and the princes of the tribes of Israel and the captains and the rulers of the king’s work offered willingly the following:

*“6 Then the chief of the fathers and princes of the tribes of Israel and the captains of thousands and of hundreds, with the rulers of the king’s work, offered willingly,7 And gave for the service of the house of God of gold five thousand talents and ten thousand drams, and of silver ten thousand talents, and of brass eighteen thousand talents, and one hundred thousand talents of iron.8 And they with whom precious stones were found gave them to the treasure of the house of the LORD, by the hand of Jehiel the Gershonite.” (1 Chronicles 29:6-8 KJV)*

The people were so glad to see their leaders give willingly from what God had given them; they were able to give because they had kept what God had given them to honor Him in due season. *“Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly, because with perfect heart they offered willingly to the LORD: and David the king also rejoiced with great joy.” (1 Chronicles 29:9 KJV)* God was honored on that occasion when people were ready and had prepared themselves to offer their finances to honor God. *“10 Wherefore David blessed the LORD before all the congregation: and David said, Blessed be thou, LORD God of Israel our father, for ever and ever. 11 Thine, O LORD is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all. 12 Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. 13 Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name. 14 But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of*

*thine own have we given thee. 15 For we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding. 16 O LORD our God, all this store that we have prepared to build thee an house for thine holy name cometh of thine hand, and is all thine own. 17 I know also, my God, that thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of mine heart I have willingly offered all these things: and now have I seen with joy thy people, which are present here, to offer willingly unto thee. 18 O LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people, and prepare their heart unto thee.” (1 Chronicles 29:10-18 KJV)*

How would Jeremiah have been able to buy the piece of land in Anathoth from his uncle, in obedience to the voice of God, for a sign to the people if he had no money?

*“<sup>6</sup> And Jeremiah said, The word of the LORD came unto me, saying, <sup>7</sup> Behold, Hanameel the son of Shallum thine uncle shall come unto thee saying, Buy thee my field that is in Anathoth: for the right of redemption is thine to buy it. <sup>8</sup> So Hanameel mine uncle's son came to me in the court of the prison according to the word of the LORD, and said unto me, Buy my field, I pray thee, that is in Anathoth, which is in the country of Benjamin: for the right of inheritance is thine, and the redemption is thine; buy it for thyself. Then I knew that this was the word of the LORD. <sup>9</sup> And I bought the field of Hanameel my uncle's son, that was in Anathoth, and weighed him the money, even seventeen shekels of silver. <sup>10</sup> And I subscribed the evidence, and sealed it, and took witnesses, and weighed him the money in the balances. <sup>11</sup> So I took the evidence of the purchase, both that which was sealed according to the law and custom, and that which was open: <sup>12</sup> And I gave the evidence of the purchase unto Baruch the son of Neriah, the son of Maaseiah, in the sight of Hanameel mine uncle's son, and in the presence of the witnesses that subscribed the book of the purchase, before all the Jews that sat in the court of the prison. <sup>13</sup> And I charged Baruch before them, saying, <sup>14</sup> Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Take these evidences, this evidence of the purchase, both which is sealed, and this evidence which is open; and put them in an earthen vessel, that*

*they may continue many days.* <sup>15</sup> *For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land.” (Jeremiah 32:6-15 KJV)* Jeremiah had collected that money and kept it with him. The Lord had already told him not to marry. *“1 The word of the LORD came also unto me, saying, 2 Thou shalt not take thee a wife, neither shalt thou have sons or daughters in this place.” (Jeremiah 16:1-2 KJV)* He kept the money and did not spend it to gratify his flesh, but kept it aside to serve God.

How would those in the second exodus have been able to contribute their gifts for rebuilding the temple at Jerusalem if they had not kept what God had blessed them with?

*“1 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, 2 Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. 3 Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem. 4 And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem. 5 Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, with all them whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem. 6 And all they that were about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, beside all that was willingly offered.” (Ezra 1:1-6 KJV)* We can see clearly that the people contributed material things for building the temple.

If we read further in Ezra chapter 1, we can see that God had preserved the vessels of the temple. *“7 Also Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of the LORD, which Nebuchadnezzar had*

*brought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put them in the house of his gods; 8 Even those did Cyrus king of Persia bring forth by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and numbered them unto Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah. 9 And this is the number of them: thirty chargers of gold, a thousand chargers of silver, nine and twenty knives, 10 Thirty basons of gold, silver basons of a second sort four hundred and ten, and other vessels a thousand. 11 All the vessels of gold and of silver were five thousand and four hundred. All these did Sheshbazzar bring up with them of the captivity that were brought up from Babylon unto Jerusalem.” (Ezra 1:7-11 KJV)* In the same way, God wants us to preserve what He has given us to be used to contribute in the building up of His work and ministry on this earth.

Joseph was commanded by God to take Mary and the child Jesus and go to Egypt to escape from Herod who wanted to kill Jesus. But would their journey have been possible without God’s provision for this family through the treasures that the Magi gave to Jesus? *“11 And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense and myrrh.12 And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.13 And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.14 When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt.” (Matthew 2:11-14 KJV)*

How could Mary have anointed the feet of Jesus and prepared Him for burial if she had not kept aside that very costly ointment of spikenard?

*“1 Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. 2 There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. 3 Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with*

*the odour of the ointment. 4 Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, 5 Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? 6 This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein. 7 Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this.” (John 12:1-7 KJV)*

How would the believers of the early church have been able to provide for the needs of others by selling their possessions and bringing the money from the sales to the apostles' feet if they had not enough for themselves?

*“44 And all that believed were together, and had all things common; 45 And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.” (Acts 2:44-45 KJV)*

*“32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. 33 And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. 34 Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, 35 And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need. 36 And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, 37 Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.” (Acts 4:32-37 KJV)*

How would the disciples at Antioch be able to collect from everyone according to his ability to provide for the saints at Jerusalem if they did not have enough for themselves?

*“27 And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. 28 And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. 29 Then the*



*disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: 30 Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.” (Acts 11:27-30 KJV)*

What we can learn from all these examples is that God gave riches that would ultimately be directed to support His work and ministries. God would enrich His people to make their life easier and so that a fair portion of what He gave to them is to be shared and ultimately used for His glory. God would be pleased with us when we store our wealth, keeping in mind to use it for the Work of HIS church and ministry.

## Chapter 2

### ***God Is Displeased When We Are Not Willing to Use Our Wealth for His Ministry***

***“Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.” (1 Timothy 6:17 KJV)***

The Lord gave riches for the purpose of providing His people added joy and blessings into their lives and to let them use these resources appropriately to bless God, His work, and His people.

Riches and wealth from God should not cause us to trust or to put our hope on them. In such circumstances, when money becomes the source of trust, then it becomes an idol and that will be the abuse of wealth.

Christ says, ***“19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: 20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: 21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” (Matthew 6:19-21 KJV)*** What He means here is that God gave us resources to employ into the Kingdom of God. If it is not used in this manner, then our material blessings will not be translated to heavenly things, and they, corrupted by our worldliness, greed, and love of money, will finally lead to our destruction.

There are those who say that Christians should not acquire much money and resources. This will be applicable if the intention is to collect money and to chase after it. But if money comes to a man through his godly lifestyle, then there is no harm to be rich and there is no harm to have plenty as long as he works with God to invest his resources into God’s Kingdom through godly living, service, and ministry.

Cain was blessed by God, but he was not willing to give his firstfruit to God:

*“1 And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD. 2 And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. 3 And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. 4 And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: 5 But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. 6 And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? 7 If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.” (Genesis 4:1-7 KJV)*

Nabal was not willing to support David in his mission to serve God, even though David and his men watched over the flocks of Nabal and his men.

*“2 And there was a man in Maon, whose possessions were in Carmel; and the man was very great, and he had three thousand sheep, and a thousand goats: and he was shearing his sheep in Carmel. 3 Now the name of the man was Nabal; and the name of his wife Abigail: and she was a woman of good understanding, and of a beautiful countenance: but the man was churlish and evil in his doings; and he was of the house of Caleb. 4 And David heard in the wilderness that Nabal did shear his sheep. 5 And David sent out ten young men, and David said unto the young men, Get you up to Carmel, and go to Nabal, and greet him in my name: 6 And thus shall ye say to him that liveth in prosperity, Peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be unto all that thou hast. 7 And now I have heard that thou hast shearers: now thy shepherds which were with us, we hurt them not, neither was there ought missing unto them, all the while they were in Carmel. 8 Ask thy young men, and they will shew thee. Wherefore let the young men find favour in thine eyes: for we come in a good day: give, I pray*

*thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand unto thy servants, and to thy son David. 9 And when David's young men came, they spake to Nabal according to all those words in the name of David, and ceased. 10 And Nabal answered David's servants, and said, Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? there be many servants nowadays that break away every man from his master. 11 Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men, whom I know not whence they be? 12 So David's young men turned their way, and went again, and came and told him all those sayings.” (1 Samuel 25:2-12 KJV)*

The rich ruler's meeting with Christ is another example of those who love to have money but are unwilling to please God with what they are blessed with.

*“18 And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? 19 And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God. 20 Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother. 21 And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up. 22 Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. 23 And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich. 24 And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! 25 For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.” (Luke 18:18-25 KJV)*

This rich ruler had plenty, but he was not willing to go with the request of Christ to use his resources for God and to bless the needy.

Jesus always challenged the rich people to shift their focus from the world, turn away from their greed, and turn to God and towards utilizing their resources for God's services.

Zaccheaus' repentance is a good case to study of how he was delivered from the bondage of greed and extortion.

***“1 And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho.2 And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich.3 And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature.4 And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way.5 And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house.6 And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.7 And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.8 And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord: Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.9 And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham.10 For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” (Luke 19:1-10 KJV)***

Zacchaeus was a rich man, the chief tax collector, and from what we read from the story, we come to understand that he was a cheater and an extortionist using his job to trick the taxpayers and exploit their helplessness to cater to his own greed. Amazingly, we find that Jesus called that sinner and entered his house. Truly the Lord came to seek and save those who are lost. ***“For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” (Luke 19:10 KJV)*** Jesus called Zacchaeus and entered his house because Zacchaeus showed signs of repentance. Man looks at the external appearance, but God looks to the heart. Zacchaeus expressed his desire to meet the Lord with true repentance, out of his willingness to turn away from his life of wickedness and turn to God and to follow His ways. We can observe the following points about his repentance in what follows:

1. ***He took the initiative to see Jesus:*** He was short but he climbed on a tree in order to avoid the crowd and to be able to see who Jesus is. ***“3 And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. 4 And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way.” (Luke 19:3-4 KJV)*** Zacchaeus used the opportunity to repent and to return to God.

God gives people the opportunity to repent but if they are not willing to give up their sins and their worldly possessions, they will not use the opportunity to repent. Zacchaeus was willing to repent. Even though he was short, he climbed a tree to meet the Lord. Repentance from greed and extortion is an opportunity from the Lord, and we need to use it and not waste it, because this opportunity may not knock at the door of our heart again.

2. ***He obeyed the Lord immediately:*** “***5 And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house. 6 And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.***” (Luke 19:5-6 KJV) Once the Lord spoke to him to come down, he obeyed immediately. When people hear God’s call, many don’t respond but try to postpone it because they are charmed by the trappings of the world. Zacchaeus’ repentance was clear and he purposed in his heart not to be double-minded when Jesus called him.
3. ***He joyfully received Christ:*** “***And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.***” (Luke 19:6 KJV) When Christ wants to come into our lives and enter our house and our family, it will be a blessing to us, and it will be for our own good. Many people are afraid to come to God because they feel they will have to forfeit the treasures of this world. There is always a question in their mind as to what they have to give up. But Zacchaeus showed his repentance and he received Christ joyfully and was glad to hear from Jesus, “***for to day I must abide at thy house.***” (Luke 19:5 KJV) For Christ to abide in our house requires a total surrender of our lives and will in full to Him.
4. ***He did not justify his sins and wrongdoing:*** The people murmured when they saw Jesus entering Zacchaeus’ house. “***And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.***” (Luke 19:7 KJV) Zacchaeus heard that and he did not justify himself or speak against the people who criticized the Lord. He realized that what the people spoke about him being a sinner was right, and he accepted that. He did not deny or justify his sinful behavior. Greed and extortion are sins and true repentance is to take responsibility for our sins and not to retaliate when we are

faced by them. We should not be among those who do not repent when they hear others speaking about their sins. Instead of repenting, they end up fighting with people who face them with the truth.

5. ***Zacchaeus corrected his bad testimony:*** Zacchaeus recognized that his sinful life had been a bad testimony and therefore he immediately took the initiative to correct his own wrongdoing. ***“And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord: Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.” (Luke 19:8 KJV)***
6. ***Zacchaeus willingly gave to God what is due to Him:*** Christ in ***Luke 18*** met the rich young man and the following had happened, ***“22 Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me.23 And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich.” (Luke 18:22-23 KJV)*** It might have reached the ears of Zacchaeus what Jesus spoke to that rich man and Zacchaeus was willing to give spontaneously to the poor. ***“And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord: Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor.” (Luke 19:8 KJV)*** Zacchaeus’ giving was not to cover up his sin but to pay back to God and to do willingly what His Word declared.
7. ***Zacchaeus’s offering was not a false one:*** Many people offer food and prepare banquets to cover up the cheating and corruption that they are living in. That is not repentance. Sins are forgiven by the blood of Jesus and salvation is received only upon repentance. We should not use our money to make friends and get support from people who would agree with wrongdoings.
8. ***Zacchaeus willingly restored what he had cheated or stolen:*** ***“And if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.” (Luke 19:8 KJV)*** Zacchaeus was willing to bear the consequences of his sins and was willing to compensate those whom he had cheated in accordance to the Word of God, ***“If a man shall steal an ox, or a sheep, and kill it, or sell it; he shall restore five oxen for an***

*ox, and four sheep for a sheep.” (Exodus 22:1 KJV)*  
Repentance from greed and cheating should be accompanied by restoration and paying back to people to whom is due.

9. *Zacchaeus was mindful that he and his family to be saved: “And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham.” (Luke 19:9 KJV)* Zacchaeus recognized that his greed and love of money will bring his family to destruction. *“He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house; but he that hateth gifts shall live.” (Proverbs 15:27 KJV)* Zacchaeus knew that he needed to repent so that the curse would not fall on his children. We need to realize that the love of money, greed and extortion will have its bad effects even on our children and the rest of our household. Zacchaeus, in his repentance, got the opportunity to teach his children through the good example of living in honesty and contentment, away from greed, extortion and the love of money. Parents who repent are the best teachers for their children. They are the children of Abraham in faith and deeds to raise up their children in a godly way as God said about Abraham. *“18 Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? 19 For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.” (Genesis 18:18-19 KJV)*

The meaning of ‘Zacchaeus’ is ‘pure’. God wants us to be truly pure. Our names may have good meanings. But our lives’ testimony should also look good and be pleasant to God. Integrity and commitment is expected from us in what we are entrusted to do. Material things that God gave to us are to be used for God’s work and for the propagation of His kingdom.



# Chapter 3

## *Learning from the Parables of Jesus*

*“1 Give ear, O my people, to my law: incline your ears to the words of my mouth. 2 I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old.” (Psalm 78:1-2 KJV)*

We will learn more and discover new things from the parables of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ when He linked the material things that we received with His second coming:

### *1. The parables of the ten pounds:*

*“11 And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. 12 He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. 13 And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. 14 But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. 15 And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. 16 Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. 17 And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. 18 And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. 19 And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities. 20 And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: 21 For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou laydest not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. 22 And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: 23 Wherefore*

*then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury? 24 And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. 25 (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) 26 For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him. 27 But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.” (Luke 19:11-27 KJV)*

The Lord had the following reasons to give the people this parable that we have read:

**A. *Because He was nigh to Jerusalem (Luke 19:11 KJV):*** The Lord was moving forward towards Jerusalem, to the place that He was to be handed over to be crucified. Therefore He needed to declare His second coming that would take place and how the people would be judged.

**B. *And because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear (Luke 19:11 KJV):*** The people had a wrong concept of how the Kingdom of God would appear. They thought the Kingdom of God would appear in a spontaneous irrational manner. Many Christians today think the Kingdom of God will appear like a dream in the night and they would find themselves in it. The parable that Christ gave shows that the Kingdom of God will not appear as something haphazard. Instead, it reveals the deep truth about our responsibility and accountability of what we received as material things from God and its relationship towards the coming event of the appearing of the Kingdom of God. According to Christ’s parable, we will be either rewarded or judged with punishment.

***“He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.” (Luke 19:12 KJV)*** ‘A certain nobleman’ refers to our Lord Jesus Christ, who came from heaven, died, and was buried and rose from the dead on the third day and went to heaven and was enthroned, and He is now at the right hand of God the Father, and He will come back to judge.

***“And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.” (Luke 19:13 KJV)*** Therefore before He passed through the cross, He called His ten servants and entrusted them with ten pounds in order for them to put it to good use and to work till He returned. One pound was equal to three months wages.

The servants who took the ten pounds should have thanked Him and been grateful to Him. But instead of that, they betrayed Him. ***“But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.” (Luke 19:14 KJV)***

The question that we are going to ask here is “Why did they hate Him and not want Him to be king over their lives? Why do people not want God and His servants to rule over their lives? And how do people not want God and His servants to rule over their lives?”

***A. People don’t like to be accountable:*** People love to receive and enjoy what they receive but they don’t want to be accountable of their lives. Accountability is an important factor to exercise power to be used for the glory of God.

***B. People don’t like to be working hard:*** People are usually lazy and they don’t want to work hard. Laziness is one of the crippling sins that lead to poverty.

***C. People don’t like to be scrutinized:*** People don’t want to be scrutinized and questioned about the details of their lives and conduct and be accountable of their material blessings received from God. The Scripture shows us that the church should scrutinize and investigate the lives of dubious members whose lifestyle are questionable. Paul said, ***“And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.” (Ephesians 5:11 KJV)*** We need to confront church members who live in sin and question their management of material things received from God. Mismanagement of resources is sin and we need to expound it and educate the church and the people under our spiritual care about it.

**D. People don't like to be controlled:** People don't want to be controlled and hindered from doing their own will. Simply they will say 'Sorry, it's my money, my house, my life, my ..... Who are you to interfere with my life?' People have many plans and ambitious projects that contradict God's will and God's plan. Therefore, they hate the Lord who devises His own plans against their wishes and plans. ***"Now therefore go to, speak to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you: return ye now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good." (Jeremiah 18:11 KJV)*** They need to be aware that the more they pursue their own plans that are against the Lord, the more He will devise plans against them to break their pride and arrogance. We need to educate our people and warn them when we discover their wrong motives in life and in the choices that they make.

As we go through the parable, we can conclude great truths that will make us understand His will, and how He expects us to manage our lives and material things, and how His second coming will take place:

**1. The Lord shall force the people to be changed:** When the Lord sent His servants and entrusted them with a task, we read that ***"his citizens hated Him," (Luke 19:14 KJV)*** but later on we can see that there were among them who became fruitful and became productive towards the Lord. It means they were changed with the measures meted out by the Lord and with His warning Word. ***"Occupy till I come." (Luke 19:13 KJV)*** Those people were changed because they knew that they would not be able to change the will of God and they would not be able to oppose the Lord and go against His plan. We need to preach and admonish the people which perhaps will cause them to pay heed to the warning and be changed.

**2. The Lord shall reward the people that had been changed:** ***"15 And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. 16 Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. 17 And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very***

*little, have thou authority over ten cities. 18 And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. 19 And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities.” (Luke 19:15-19 KJV)*

Eternal life with rewards will be the lot of those who comply with God’s will and plan and prudently manage their lives and the resources that God has given them.

**3. The Lord shall punish the people that are wicked:** *“But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.” (Luke 19:27 KJV)* Eternal fire will be the lot of those who hate God and hate to walk in His ways.

**4. The Lord shall judge the people that are not willing to be changed and who are hiding their sins:** *“20 And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: 21 For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow.” (Luke 19:20-21 KJV)* This person pretends to be smart in disguising his sins. He is lazy, selfish, and does not want to work hard, and when he was called to give an account of his material blessings, he puts forth several excuses and even blames the Lord for his non-productivity. People such as these are found in the churches today; they know exactly what God expects of them but they are adamant and unwilling to comply and they use all their might to cover up their sins. They are malingerers who pretend to be sick, disabled, poor or exposed to injustice; shedding crocodile tears and reeling in self-pity to cover up their sins. But the Lord will face such kind of people and expose their sins and judge them. The church should exercise discernment in identifying such people and deal with them and their sins.

The Lord faced that wicked servant, *“And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow.” (Luke 19:22 KJV)* Therefore, we need to face the people who are bad stewards and bring them under our spiritual care when we are called to do that.

The Lord even explained to that servant what he should have done. *“Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my*

***coming I might have required mine own with usury?” (Luke 19:23 KJV)*** Therefore we need to explain to those people what they ought to do, and how to handle their finances and their material blessings.

When the Lord placed His judgment on that person, He did not reward him and even what he had been given was taken away from him. We need to explain to the people that hiding their sins and abusing the resources of God will bring God’s judgment on them and even what had been given to them will be taken away. ***“And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds.” (Luke 19:24 KJV)***

Such kind of people who know God’s will, but still conceal their sins inside the church and indulge in material abuse will try to deceive others under the garb of false godliness and innocence. They usually feed off the pity of others in the church. When such people are judged by God, believers who are deceived by them will pray to God for them and ask the Lord not to take from them what He intends to give to the one that has many. ***“(And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.)” (Luke 19:25 KJV)***

In every church we will find people pretending to be poor and financially helpless expecting monetary help but never desiring to be transparent or accountable for the help they receive, instead, they spend their finances in wrong ways and indulge in wrong priorities. But the Lord is faithful and will explain to us, His church, and expose the sins of such kind of sinners inside the body of Christ and the ways in which they take advantage of the church and other members. The Lord will not only expose their sins but He will teach us how to handle such kind of people from causing destruction inside the body of Christ.

The Lord will show His justice toward those who are obedient in doing His will and those who are good stewards of the material things that they have received from Him. ***“For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him.” (Luke 19:26 KJV)***

We need to understand that we cannot go against His will and plans. Sooner or later, we will be exposed and the Lord will deal with us

according to our sins. Our God is the Lord of Justice and He will reward those who are faithful and fruitful. Therefore, let us be motivated by the Lord's reward to repent and be changed to receive the blessings in full and live a life that pleases God.

## *II. The Parable of the talents*

*“14 For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. 15 And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. 16 Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. 17 And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. 18 But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. 19 After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. 20 And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. 21 His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. 22 He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. 23 His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. 24 Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: 25 And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. 26 His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: 27 Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. 28 Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. 29 For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken*

*away even that which he hath. 30 And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matthew 25:14-30 KJV)*

This is another parable that the Lord Jesus Christ shared with His disciples, before He suffered on the cross, about His return to judge the world. The talents describe what God has entrusted to us, the blessings that He wants us to use for His glory and for the benefit of the people around us whom God has placed under our care. The talents can be:

**A. The achievement of our lives and the time available:** God’s desire for us is to use this time fruitfully. There are 24 hours in a day. God wants us to use the hours of the day fruitfully. From the time we wake up till we retire to bed, we need to receive a clear program from God of what we need to do. We should not be aimless and without goals and neither should we waste time. There is a time factor for each day and there is an age factor for man’s activity and achievement. When we are young, we have much energy and we should not waste it because when we are old we will not be able to do the things we did when we were young.

**B. The skills that He has given us:** Our professional skills, our various talents, our sound scientific knowledge and the ability to learn and use technology are to be employed for the extension of God’s Kingdom.

**C. The material possessions that He has given us:** The Lord has blessed us with jobs, salaries, wealth and assets, capitals, lands, houses, buildings, cars, farms, animals, and many other things that need to be used for His glory and for the name of Jesus to be lifted up.

**D. The spiritual gifts that He has given us:** These are gifts that God has given to those who believe and follow Jesus. He gave them different gifts like prophecy, the gift to perform miracles, the gift of healing, encouragement, showing mercy, administration, teaching and so on. These gifts are to be used to serve people for the common good, and to bring honor and glory to God. The spiritual gifts are not to be used for monetary benefits or as a meal ticket. The church should not allow such misconduct. Some preachers move from church to church



to gain finances for every session of preaching. There are those who prophesy and predict the future and those who do miracles and earn money. There are those who seek churches to pay them for their talents and services and use their God-given gifts with the wrong motive and purpose. These contradict the great commission of the Lord. ***“18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” (Matthew 28:18-20 KJV)***

God has given to every one of us at least a portion of the above-mentioned talents. Some have received much; others have little as the Bible says, ***“to every man according to his several ability.” (Matthew 25:15 KJV)*** Jesus, in the parable of the talents, describes how the Master, who is Jesus Himself, had entrusted His servants with certain talents before he left on his journey. When he came back, he settled accounts with them. The man who had received five talents brought another five and the one who received two had also doubled his portion.

But the man who got one talent failed his master as we read: ***“24 Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: 25 And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine.” (Matthew 25:24-25 KJV)***

Why did this man not use what God had given him? What hindered him from being effective in doing God’s work and to bear fruit? As we analyze what the Master had said to him, we will know what made that servant and what might make us ineffective in using the talent that God has given: ***“26 His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: 27 Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.” (Matthew 25:26-27 KJV)***

1. **Laziness:** To delay, to postpone, and to embrace sleep more than necessary will rob us of the time that God has given us. ***“33 Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: 34 So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man.”(Proverbs 24:33-34 KJV)*** God wants us to be diligent in our lives. We need to spend more time in prayer, more time in reading the Holy Bible, which is the Word of God, and meditate on it. Many have lost a lot of what God had given them because of laziness and lack of diligence. Many Scriptures admonish and speak against laziness and teach us how laziness and slothfulness or being a sluggard would ruin our lives.

***“6 Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: 7 Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, 8 Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest. 9 How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? 10 Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: 11 So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.” (Proverbs 6:6-11 KJV)***

***“The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.” (Proverbs 13:4 KJV)***

***“A slothful man hideth his hand in his bosom, and will not so much as bring it to his mouth again.” (Proverbs 19:24 KJV)***

***“The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing.” (Proverbs 20:4 KJV)***

***“The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labour.” (Proverbs 21:25 KJV)***

***“30 I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; 31 And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. 32 Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction. 33 Yet a little sleep, a little slumber,***

*a little folding of the hands to sleep: 34 So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man.” (Proverbs 24:30-34 KJV)*

*“The slothful man saith, There is a lion in the way; a lion is in the streets.” (Proverbs 26:13 KJV)*

*“As the door turneth upon his hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed.” (Proverbs 26:14 KJV)*

*“The slothful hideth his hand in his bosom; it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth.” (Proverbs 26:15 KJV)*

*“The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason.” (Proverbs 26:16 KJV)*

*“Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.” (Ezekiel 16:49 KJV)* One of the sins of Sodom was idleness and unwillingness to work because of plenty of bread that was available to them. Even though the Lord has blessed us with plenty of provisions, we still need to work and play our part in the life of the church and in the life of the society.

2. ***Wickedness:*** Living a sinful life makes us unfruitful people. Craftiness, the shrewdness of the world, and corruption will make us ineffective. Whatever success people may taste at the beginning employing their crooked ways and practices, they will finally be exposed and they will face the consequences of using for the evil devices they employed. *“Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.” (Hebrews 4:13 KJV)*
3. ***Lack of knowledge:*** When the lazy wicked servant came to give an account to his Master, he said: *“I knew thee that thou art” (Matthew 25:24 KJV)*, but in reality, he didn't know his Master well. Many times we think we know God

and His ways, but in reality, we don't know Him well and that makes us ineffective servants. God said, ***“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.”*** (Hosea 4:6 KJV) So, how are we going to overcome this lapse in the knowledge of God? The only way is by reading the Bible regularly. Let us daily read God's Word, meditate on it and apply it in our lives. The Word of God is the way to know the will of God our Master and Lord. Therefore the church is accountable to reach the members with God's Word and get every member, especially the new believers, to be a part of a Bible study group in which God's Word is explained well and everyone's spiritual needs are met.

What we have read is a good reminder for us to check ourselves. We need to desire to hear from Jesus when He comes again, the words, ***“Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.”*** (Matthew 25:23 KJV) But we need to humble ourselves before God, to watch ourselves, and to accept correction from Him and from His church.

***III. The parable of the unjust steward:*** In this parable, we will further learn how to manage our material possessions:

***“1 And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. 2 And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward. 3 Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed. 4 I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. 5 So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? 6 And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. 7 Then***

*said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore. 8 And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. 9 And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations. 10 He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. 11 If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? 12 And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own? 13 No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” (Luke 16:1-13 KJV)*

In this parable of the unjust steward, we can learn good things about how to manage our material possessions and how to aspire for eternal life.

*“1 And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. 2 And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward.” (Luke 16:1-2 KJV)* The steward was working under a rich man who gave him material things to manage.

There will be material things given to us and we are called to manage them in a proper manner. Therefore, we need to be aware of the following acts:

1. The material things that we received and abused, will be the instruments that will be used against us to teach us a lesson.
2. There will always be a time when we will be called to give an account. God may not allow judgment of sin for a certain time,

but sooner or later He will expose the sin that we are doing against His will and expect us to give account.

3. There will be always a system that God provides to scrutinize our lives style and deal with our shortcomings; a system that can deprive us of our privileges and the amenities.
4. The sin of the steward was wasting the goods of his master. Wastage and abuse of resources is a sin and God would judge us based on that.
5. We should know that all of what we have is not ours but God's. He gave them to us to manage them. They are not ours but His. Therefore, wasting resources is wasting what belongs to God. Therefore, when we waste, we are hampering the system of God.
6. We should know that all what we have is not ours, but the peoples'. God gave them to us in order to pass them to others. Therefore, when we waste, we are depriving others of what is due to them along their rights.

***“And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward.” (Luke 16:2 KJV)*** The steward was cornered and faced with his sin. God always does expose sins, not to put people to shame but to give them a chance for repentance. We need to take it positively when God causes a disturbance in our lives and exposes our sin. His purpose is our salvation and not our destruction. Therefore, let us take this opportunity to repent and turn away from our sins and turn to God. Let us also note that when the steward was confronted by the rich man for his sin, he was told: ***“for thou mayest be no longer steward.” (Luke 16:2 KJV)*** So he was given a chance to continue in his office if he chose to repent. The judgment of God will be set forth and it will come true if we don't turn away from our sinful attitude.

***“Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed.” (Luke 16:3 KJV)*** The steward, through his thoughts,

revealed more sins that he was guilty of in his life. He was lazy and not willing to work hard as he said, ***“I cannot dig.” (Luke 16:3 KJV)*** and he had pride and lacked humility as he said, ***“To beg I am ashamed.” (Luke 16:3 KJV)*** From the way the steward’s thoughts showed that he had no repentance and had tactics to cover up his sin further and to rebel.

***“I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.” (Luke 16:4 KJV)*** We need to understand that our thoughts are unspoken words we speak to God. Our thoughts, which the devil cannot decipher and others around us cannot discover, are read and interpreted by God, who is the reader of our thoughts: ***“9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? 10 I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.” (Jeremiah 17:9-10 KJV)***

Also, we need to know those wrong thoughts will invite temptation that will misdirect us to take certain decisions that will result in sin. The steward resolved to build up the friendship with the people in a wrong, compromising way. Those people, who were in debt to his master, received advice from him on how to escape from paying a portion of their debt by rewriting the document. He did this in order to gain their favor so that they would receive him into their houses when he lost his job. His heart was ***‘deceitful above all things and desperately wicked’***. That is how some people behave when their sins are exposed.

***“5 So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? 6 And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. 7 Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore.” (Luke 16:5-7 KJV)*** When the unjust steward was informed that he would lose his position if he didn’t repent, he manipulated the situation to win the favor of his friends to ensure his job’s stability in the future. But that is unjust and injustice is another sin that we will be

responsible for if we use corrupt ways in dealing with the transactions of our lives. The focus of that unjust steward was worldly gain and he abused the resources that were entrusted under his care to secure his future.

***“And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.” (Luke 16:8 KJV)*** Sarcastically, the lord commended the unjust steward for his smartness in achieving his ungodly target in a devilish, earthly, and unspiritual way with the wisdom of this world. The time sin is exposed, it will show the true nature of that person. Either people will repent or become worse. The steward of this parable chose the latter.

***“For the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.” (Luke 16:8 KJV)*** The children of this world, like the steward, opt for the worldly treasures over the heavenly eternal treasure. We may find them wiser and financially sound, and well versed in cheating, lying, and manipulation and are eager to grab opportunities to gain better positions and accumulate treasures of this world. They will have their reward on earth, but in hell, they will receive what is due to them.

In contrast, we, the children of light, should not follow their ways because our focus is towards heaven. We are recommended to use the material that is given to us in a godly way to promote the ministries of God. We might be laughed at and ridiculed by people because of our unwillingness to comply with the standard of the world, to do evil, and promote corruption, but we need to bear that because our reward is in Heaven.

***“And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.” (Luke 16:9 KJV)*** Jesus wants us to use the resources given to us in a godly way and according to the Scriptures, to please God and to do His will to secure eternity with God. We are called to maintain the friendship with Jesus and keep managing our resources as He expects of us. For then, He will reward us abundantly.



***“And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.” (Revelation 22:12 KJV)***

***“He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.” (Luke 16:10 KJV)*** Events in life are quizzes that God uses as a checklist to read our thoughts and view our conduct. He will recompense us accordingly. Whether we are at home, in the office, at the market or somewhere else, we will be tested and watched carefully for how we respond to situations and our faithfulness will be measured based on that and future events will be programmed accordingly. Faithfulness in small things will build God’s trust in us, while unjust conduct will deprive us of God’s blessings.

***“If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?” (Luke 16:11 KJV)*** Now if we will abuse the resources given to us and direct them only towards our selfish gain, then God will not entrust us with true celestial riches. The ***unrighteous mammon*** is the corruption that is around us. God watches how we respond to the process of corruption. If we go along with the trend of this world, then God will not entrust us with eternal riches and even eternal life.

Material blessings come from God and He gave them to us to use them wisely. He monitors, examines, and scrutinizes how we use them. Material blessings are not ours but God’s. He gave them to us to test us and to find out if we are faithful in using them. If we pass the test, then God will reward us with blessings, that are our own and they will be everlasting. But if we fail God and start to abuse our resources to nourish our flesh, selfish ambition, and worldly plans, then God would not bestow on us everlasting blessings. ***“And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man’s, who shall give you that which is your own?” (Luke 16:12 KJV)***

***“No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” (Luke 16:13 KJV)*** Our material possessions and the way we manage them will determine our next move in life and our final destination. We need to choose God

and do properly with what He has entrusted to us for they are His. They are not only for us but for others, even to those of the next generation.

**IV. The story of the rich man:** Our material possessions and the way we manage them will determine the end of our journey. Jesus spoke in **Luke 16:**

***“19 There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: 20 And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, 21 And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. 22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; 23 And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. 24 And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. 25 But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. 26 And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. 27 Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: 28 For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. 29 Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. 30 And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. 31 And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.” (Luke 16:19-31 KJV)***

Abraham explained to that rich man why he is in Hell in the following: ***“But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.” (Luke 16:25 KJV)*** He was sent to hell because he did not allow his body to suffer. He received

the best of all the good things during his life right to his death. He denied himself no pleasure. That rich man was not judged because he did not help the poor Lazarus, but because of his unwillingness to live a simple life and he refused to heed the good example of Lazarus. We are not saying here that we should make ourselves poor or to neglect the poor among us, but to heed and follow the pattern of life that God ordained for us.

The rich man's request for Lazarus to cool his tongue was refused by Abraham because there was a great gulf fixed between them. Upon hearing that, he again requested that Lazarus to be sent to his house so that Lazarus can tell his five brothers not to come to that place, ***“For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.” (Luke 16:28 KJV)*** The rich man had left behind five brothers who had witnessed how he had lived in luxury. So he was a bad example to them and he wanted to correct it by sending Lazarus to tell them the truth that their brother was being tortured in Hell. But, ***“Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.” (Luke 16:29 KJV)*** The prophets of the Old Testament and the New Testament apostles, prophets, and saints are good examples to us today to live away from worldliness and to live a simple life that pleases God with the willingness to suffer for Him. The style of life that the rich man was living in was contradictory to the Word of God and the style of living that Moses, the apostles, and the prophets declared in God's Word. I am not saying that we should live like a monk but to live simply according to God's Word.

The rich man was judged because he used the good things that he received from God for his own comfort. He neither looked towards God nor got himself involved in the ministry of God or at least helped the people around him to know and live in the truth. We are accountable before God for everything we have received from Him and are expected to act prudently. Neglect of things we have received from Him to be used for His purpose is a dangerous thing, and God sooner or later would judge us for that.

Now it is clear why we need to be willing to embrace the idea to suffer in this world, ***“Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath***

***suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin.***” (1 Peter 4:1 KJV) Living a godly life is the best way to escape from the sin of indulging our flesh in worldly pleasure. With such a mind and attitude we will become a good example to others in living away from worldliness and the lust of the flesh, accepting trials as ordained by God for us, persevering in all holiness and godliness, directing our resources to serve God and the ministries of the church, and inviting others to follow our example as we follow the example of Christ.

***V. The parable of the rich fool:*** Riches that are ordained by God are accompanied by wisdom and discretion made available by God on how to use them. But riches that are the product of greed will end up in a miserable way. Let us read this parable:

***“16 And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: 17 And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? 18 And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. 20 But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? 21 So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”*** (Luke 12:16-21 KJV)

Deep in our souls, that ‘leech’ (i.e. greed and covetousness) lies low and that is why the Lord warns us: ***“And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.”*** (Luke 12:15 KJV) That greed and covetousness are present inside people. Jesus gave the above parable that underlines the stages of development of greed:

***A. Initial produce:*** ***“The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully”*** (Luke 12:16 KJV) This is the beginning and the normal stage of life. Every one of us has a good crop, whether it pertains to material possession, knowledge, certificates, positions, relationships and so on that should be appropriately dealt with.

**B. Serving the leech:** To what we have, we want to add more, ‘like the leech that is never satisfied.’ *“The horseleach hath two daughters, crying, Give, give.” (Proverbs 30:15 KJV)* More money, more education, more friends, until the time we say, *“I have no room where to bestow my fruits.” (Luke 12:17 KJV)* Many are working hard to satisfy their greed and lust by accumulating things that they are not in need of and are not going to use in the future.

**C. Slave to the leech:** When they reach their goal of possessing certain assets and have no more places for it they will say, *“And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.” (Luke 12:18 KJV)* This is the stage where the greed really becomes a burden. It forces men to build their own walls, towers, and stores on earth with selfishness and pride. At this stage, a man’s possessions will become a burden to him. His money becomes a source of trouble to him.

**D. False security:** In this final stage, the plenty of material that they have and the great effort that they have put in to collect it will make them say, *“And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.” (Luke 12:19 KJV)* Greed may serve on earth but this is not the currency used in heaven. And the time they feel that they are very rich is in fact when **‘they are empty, and their walls and towers are straw.’**

*“20 But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? 21 So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.” (Luke 12:20-21 KJV)* Wealth cannot keep the angel of death away from the door. What is the benefit of these possessions? Can they be taken to the grave? *“For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” (Mark 8:36 KJV)* That is why we need to live our lives and to use all our resources wisely, not only for ourselves but for His name to be glorified and for His work to be propagated.

Therefore in whatever stage we are, we need to think to ourselves and find out how we can use whatever treasure God has given us to

promote the work of God and to be rich in Him. *“1 Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days. 2 Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth.” (Ecclesiastes 11:1-2 KJV)*

# Chapter 4

## *Right Resources for Money*

*“Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the LORD thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go.” (Isaiah 48:17 KJV)*

The Word of God in the Bible teaches us the right way and the wrong way to gain money. We need to know the truth in order that we may abide by it and avoid the wrong way of dealing with money matters that brings problems and troubles into our lives. The right ways to collect money are listed below:

***I. Hard work with our own hands: “Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.” (Ephesians KJV 4:28)*** God has given each and every person, hands and feet as well as talents. So the admonition here is that each person should quit being lazy and resorting to stealing, find a job, and exercise his hands and talents to do what is useful so that he can spend on himself as well as save to share with others the blessing of God. Each and every person should stop being negative and considering himself a failure and move forward with positivity and be productive in his contribution to the people that the Lord has placed him amongst. The Bible does not speak only about the power to get wealth but it also speaks about hard work and painful toil. God gave Adam the task to adorn the Garden of Eden and preserve it. ***“And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.” (Genesis 2:15 KJV)*** After Adam fell into sin God told him the following: ***“17 And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; 18 Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; 19 In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto***

***dust shalt thou return.***” (Genesis 3:17-19 KJV) Man will eat from the hard toil of his hands. We gain our money and income through hard work. As we follow Christ and obey His Word and submit to His will, even though all the hard work, we will experience joy and comfort.

Some people may ask how it is possible to produce wealth with their meager income from a menial job and live well. Let us just be reminded of what the Bible tells us about the people of God who had held menial jobs and earned a low income and how God had made them rich and enabled them to be great and do great things. Abraham had been a shepherd, but God made him very rich. David started as a shepherd, but God made him a wealthy king. There are many rich people who had started from the bottom rung of the ladder of wealth and made their way up with the help of God. They had held humble positions earning a mere pittance. Our profession, however humble it may be, will not hinder us from getting wealth. We need to follow God’s Word and His principles regarding finances to produce wealth.

As we follow the Scriptures in the Bible, we can find that the people of God did different kinds of work.

Cain worked as a farmer, and Abel worked as a shepherd. ***“And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.”*** (Genesis 4:2 KJV)

Noah after the flood became a husbandman. ***“And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard.”*** (Genesis 9:20 KJV)

Abraham and Lot kept cattle. ***“The herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle.”*** (Genesis 13:7 KJV)

Ishmael worked as an archer. ***“And God was with the lad; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer.”*** (Genesis 21:20 KJV)

Isaac worked as a farmer. ***“Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year an hundredfold: and the LORD blessed him.”*** (Genesis 26:12 KJV)



Esau worked as a hunter. ***“and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field.” (Genesis 25:27 KJV)***

Rachel was a shepherdess. ***“Rachel his daughter cometh with the sheep” (Genesis 29:6 KJV)***

Jacob worked as a shepherd. ***“38 This twenty years have I been with thee; thy ewes and thy she goats have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flock have I not eaten. 39 That which was torn of beasts I brought not unto thee; I bare the loss of it; of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day, or stolen by night. 40 Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes. 41 Thus have I been twenty years in thy house; I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle: and thou hast changed my wages ten times.” (Genesis 31:38-41 KJV)***

Jacob’s sons were shepherds. ***“These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report.” (Genesis 37:2 KJV)***

Joseph, after he was sold by his brothers worked a servant in Potiphar house and then was promoted to being an overseer. ***“And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand.” (Genesis 39:4 KJV)*** In the jail, Joseph was in charge of the prisoners. ***“And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it.” (Genesis 39:22 KJV)*** Joseph continued to be in charge of the prisoners until he was released from jail and became the second in command in Egypt after Pharaoh. ***“39 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art: 40 Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou.” (Genesis 41:39-40 KJV)***

At first, the Israelites in Egypt worked as shepherds. *“The land of Egypt is before thee; in the best of the land make thy father and brethren to dwell; in the land of Goshen let them dwell: and if thou knowest any men of activity among them, then make them rulers over my cattle.” (Genesis 47:6 KJV)* Later on, they did construction work and built cities. *“Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses.” (Exodus 1:11 KJV)*

Moses, after he had left Pharaoh, worked as a shepherd in Midian for his father-in-law until God called him to lead his people. *“Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb.” (Exodus 3:1 KJV)*

Ruth worked as a gleaner, and Boaz was a farmer and the owner of a field. *“2 And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter. 3 And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech.” (Ruth 2:2-3 KJV)*

David was a shepherd. *“And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep.” (1 Samuel 16:11 KJV)*

Nehemiah was a cupbearer. *“For I was the king's cupbearer.” (Nehemiah 1:11 KJV)*

Daniel was a president under Darius the king. *“And over these three presidents; of whom Daniel was first: that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage.” (Daniel 6:2 KJV)*

Amos was a herdsman and a gatherer of sycamore fruit. *“Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was an herdsman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit.” (Amos 7:14 KJV)*

Jesus was a carpenter. ***“Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.” (Mark 6:3 KJV)***

Simon Peter and Andrew his brother were fishers. ***“And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.” (Matthew 4:18 KJV)***

Matthew was a tax collector. ***“And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.” (Matthew 9:9 KJV)***

Paul, Aquila, and Priscilla were tentmakers. ***“1 After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth; 2 And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them. 3 And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers.” (Acts 18:1-3 KJV)*** ***“34 Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.” (Acts 20:34 KJV)*** They worked and provided for the necessities of their ministries from God.

Luke was a physician. ***“Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you.” (Colossians 4:14 KJV)***

From the different kinds of professions mentioned above, we can conclude that whatever kind of work we do and whatever income we receive, we need to work faithfully putting our best foot forward and then God will certainly bless the work of our hands and will multiply our income. It is not necessary that we need to hold big jobs and earn a high income in order to be comfortable financially. But it depends on our obedience toward God’s command to work and labor faithfully in order to please Him.

Many people refuse to accept work that gives them a meager income or work that requires hard labor. There is the example of Jacob who worked tirelessly and faithfully despite being cheated and abused by his master.

Jacob started his work with nothing, but he toiled to raise a family as well as save something for himself. He worked over a span of twenty years. Jacob had been cheated ten times by his uncle and master Laban but God saw his misery and justified him and restored to him whatever was taken away from him.

*“1 And he heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, Jacob hath taken away all that was our father's; and of that which was our father's hath he gotten all this glory. 2 And Jacob beheld the countenance of Laban, and, behold, it was not toward him as before. 3 And the LORD said unto Jacob, Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred; and I will be with thee. 4 And Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field unto his flock, 5 And said unto them, I see your father's countenance, that it is not toward me as before; but the God of my father hath been with me. 6 And ye know that with all my power I have served your father. 7 And your father hath deceived me, and changed my wages ten times; but God suffered him not to hurt me. 8 If he said thus, The speckled shall be thy wages; then all the cattle bare speckled: and if he said thus, The ringstraked shall be thy hire; then bare all the cattle ringstraked. 9 Thus God hath taken away the cattle of your father, and given them to me. 10 And it came to pass at the time that the cattle conceived, that I lifted up mine eyes, and saw in a dream, and, behold, the rams which leaped upon the cattle were ringstraked, speckled, and grised. 11 And the angel of God spake unto me in a dream, saying, Jacob: And I said, Here am I. 12 And he said, Lift up now thine eyes, and see, all the rams which leap upon the cattle are ringstraked, speckled, and grised: for I have seen all that Laban doeth unto thee. 13 I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto me: now arise, get thee out from this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred. 14 And Rachel and Leah answered and said unto him, Is there yet any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house? 15 Are we not counted of him strangers? for he hath sold us, and hath quite*

*devoured also our money. 16 For all the riches which God hath taken from our father, that is ours, and our children's: now then, whatsoever God hath said unto thee, do. 17 Then Jacob rose up, and set his sons and his wives upon camels; 18 And he carried away all his cattle, and all his goods which he had gotten, the cattle of his getting, which he had gotten in Padanaram, for to go to Isaac his father in the land of Canaan.” (Genesis 31:1-18 KJV)*

Laban followed Jacob, but God saved Jacob and rescued him from Laban and his sons and gave him the upper hand and justified him before them.

*“36 And Jacob was wroth, and chode with Laban: and Jacob answered and said to Laban, What is my trespass? what is my sin, that thou hast so hotly pursued after me? 37 Whereas thou hast searched all my stuff, what hast thou found of all thy household stuff? set it here before my brethren and thy brethren, that they may judge betwixt us both. 38 This twenty years have I been with thee; thy ewes and thy she goats have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flock have I not eaten. 39 That which was torn of beasts I brought not unto thee; I bare the loss of it; of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day, or stolen by night. 40 Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes. 41 Thus have I been twenty years in thy house; I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle: and thou hast changed my wages ten times. 42 Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely thou hadst sent me away now empty. God hath seen mine affliction and the labour of my hands, and rebuked thee yesternight.” (Genesis 31:36-42 KJV)*

We can learn the following truths from the example of Jacob and the reason why God blessed Him:

**A. Jacob worked with all his power:** *“And ye know that with all my power I have served your father.” (Genesis 31:6 KJV)* Jacob served Laban with all his strength. God saw the magnitude to which Jacob spent in his service toward Laban. Therefore, the God of justice took from Laban and gave to Jacob. When we serve with all our power,

God will value that and reward us according to the extent of our labor in service. God gave Jacob based on the work of his hands. If Jacob had not worked hard, then from where could God have given him? God would not have taken the fruit of other people's labor and given it to Jacob. Therefore, for God to act on our behalf, we need to work and serve with all our power. Even though people may cheat us, abuse us or take advantage of us, we need to strive for and endure in our work. Then God will take the blessings from our unreasonable cheaters and give it to us.

**B. Jacob was honest and he did not cheat:** Even though he was cheated by Laban and was working under hard circumstances, he did not cheat. He kept his integrity and bore all the losses patiently. What Jacob sowed, he reaped. He was honest and he reaped abundant blessings. Laban was a cheater and therefore, God took from him and gave to Jacob. *“7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.8 For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” (Galatians 6:7-8 KJV)* Therefore, for God to act on our behalf, we should always be honest and not cheat even if people cheat us, in obedience to God's Word and instruction. *“9 Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again; 10 Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.” (Titus 2:9-10 KJV)*

**C. Jacob kept his covenant with God who appeared unto him at Bethel:** *“I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto me: now arise, get thee out from this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred.” (Genesis 31:13 KJV)* Jacob covenanted with God by surrendering his life to Him, acknowledging Bethel as the house of God and offering Him his tithes. *“20 And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, 21 So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God: 22 And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.” (Genesis 28:20-22)*

**KJV)** When we commit our lives to God in the same manner as Jacob, the Lord will aid us and support us in our work and He will deal with those who try to cheat us and abuse us. He will rescue us and give us their wealth.

**D. Jacob persevered and kept the same level of commitment until the time God sent him back home:** He worked for twenty years under Laban and he kept what he had committed himself to do. ***“And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.” (Galatians 6:9 KJV)*** Therefore, we will receive the harvest of God and we will have plenty of wealth if we will not be weary in doing good and persevering till the end.

It is God who blesses our income and the work of our hands; therefore, we need to put on the right attitude as we work.

When our Lord Jesus Christ was on earth, He moved about working righteousness. He declared, ***“But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.” (John 5:17 KJV)*** God the Father works, Jesus God the Son works, and we today is filled with the Holy Spirit are required to work too.

Thomas Edison once said, “There is no substitute for hard work.” If we do not toil, we do not eat. And this is what Paul wrote to the Thessalonians to teach them to work diligently. They were lazy people and they said that they were waiting for the Lord, and so didn’t feel the need to work: ***“6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. 7 For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; 8 Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: 9 Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us. 10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.” (2 Thessalonians 3:6-10 KJV)*** Paul even paid for his food while he was in Thessalonica because he wanted to teach them that they should not depend on easy money. God wants us to depend on ourselves and

not on other people to feed us. We should not wait for easy money to fall into our lap. Money received this way will not produce wealth for us; everything we receive from the devil will destroy us.

When we work, we need to be honest and faithful. We should work gladly and do it unto the Lord and not for man. We don't work hard because we fear man. We don't work hard to please men, but we do our best in our work because we fear God who is watching us and who will reward us for our good work, ***“22 Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God; 23 And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; 24 Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. 25 But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.”*** (Colossians 3:22-25 KJV) Even though we need to work as slaves in our job with low income, yet if we follow Christ in our work, then God will reward us. God will see the principles that we are working on and He will reward us. ***“5 Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; 6 Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; 7 With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: 8 Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.”*** (Ephesians 6:5-8 KJV)

We need to submit to the authority placed over us in our work spots and be effective contributors, trusting God to deal with their wrongdoings towards us. The Scriptures contains several warnings directed to those who abuse their workers and take advantage of them.

***“And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.”*** (Ephesians 6:9 KJV)

The above example of Jacob and how God rewarded him and delivered him from the hand of Laban who abused him is a good lesson to remember always. We need to trust that God is in full



control. He can and will deal with those who abuse us and deprive us of our rights.

***“1 Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. 2 Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are motheaten. 3 Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. 4 Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. 5 Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. 6 Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you.” (James 5:1-6 KJV)***

In Exodus chapter 16, God provided food for His people when they cried for want of food. God sent them manna and He instructed them to gather a certain portion every day, that He might test their obedience whether they would abide by His law or not.

***“1 And they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came unto the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt. 2 And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness: 3 And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger. 4 Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no.” (Exodus 16:1-4 KJV)***

God fulfilled his promise to them and supplied their needs.

***“5 And it shall come to pass, that on the sixth day they shall prepare that which they bring in; and it shall be twice as much as they gather***

*daily. 6 And Moses and Aaron said unto all the children of Israel, At even, then ye shall know that the LORD hath brought you out from the land of Egypt: 7 And in the morning, then ye shall see the glory of the LORD; for that he heareth your murmurings against the LORD: and what are we, that ye murmur against us? 8 And Moses said, This shall be, when the LORD shall give you in the evening flesh to eat, and in the morning bread to the full; for that the LORD heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against him: and what are we? your murmurings are not against us, but against the LORD. 9 And Moses spake unto Aaron, Say unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, Come near before the LORD: for he hath heard your murmurings. 10 And it came to pass, as Aaron spake unto the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and, behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud. 11 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 12 I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel: speak unto them, saying, At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God. 13 And it came to pass, that at even the quails came up, and covered the camp: and in the morning the dew lay round about the host. 14 And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground. 15 And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat.” (Exodus 16:5-15 KJV)*

When the Israelites saw what God had rained to them, they questioned Moses about it, and they said, *“It is manna: for they wist not what it was.” (Exodus 16:15 KJV)* Moses explained it to them that, *“This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat.” (Exodus 16:15 KJV)* That form of bread might not have matched the bread that they were baking and eating but it was what God had chosen to give them to eat for survival. Their situation can be compared to the situation today. When we are in need of a job and income, we pray to God and in answer to that, the Lord might open a door that might be contradictory to our expectation and beyond our comprehension and understanding and we start to question and grumble. This is what the Israelites did when God sent them bread from heaven.

Sometimes, when God provides a job and an income, He will instruct us and set rules for us to work in a particular way for us to depend on Him on a daily basis and for His name to be glorified and to survive.

**A. The amount of the work to be performed:** *“16 This is the thing which the LORD hath commanded, Gather of it every man according to his eating, an omer for every man, according to the number of your persons; take ye every man for them which are in his tents. 17 And the children of Israel did so, and gathered, some more, some less. 18 And when they did mete it with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack; they gathered every man according to his eating.” (Exodus 16:16-18 KJV)* God had put a limit on the amount to be gathered. We should work to a certain limit so that our needs will be met in the kind of job that God has provided. Those who gather much out of greed, will not be blessed by God to have more, and those who are satisfied and content with what God has given them will not have less and lack anything. All glory to Him who trains us and disciplines us!

**B. To work regularly every day:** *“19 And Moses said, Let no man leave of it till the morning. 20 Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto Moses; but some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms, and stank: and Moses was wroth with them.” (Exodus 16:19-20 KJV)* God wanted them to work every day, that is why they were not allowed to save for the next day. God was dealing with them so that there was no room for laziness. *“He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster.” (Proverbs 18:9 KJV)* Faith in God is not only trusting God for provision, but also for being diligent and active in doing our part daily, and to be persistent in our effort.

**C. Laziness is judged:** *“And they gathered it every morning, every man according to his eating: and when the sun waxed hot, it melted.” (Exodus 16: 21 KJV)* God was so particular with them that they need to wake up early to gather the manna at a particular time. If they had delayed, they would have missed their food. So they were trained and disciplined by God to value and appreciate the job that God had given them. *“Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest,*

*and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.” (Ephesians 5:14 KJV)*

*D. Sabbath rules to be observed and honored: “22 And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man: and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. “23 And he said unto them, This is that which the LORD hath said, To morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the LORD: bake that which ye will bake to day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning. 24 And they laid it up till the morning, as Moses bade: and it did not stink, neither was there any worm therein. 25 And Moses said, Eat that to day; for to day is a sabbath unto the LORD: to day ye shall not find it in the field. 26 Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the sabbath, in it there shall be none.” (Exodus 16: 22-26 KJV)* God gave them the kind of job that would sustain them physically and they were expected to honor God by obeying His commands. They were given one day of rest, *“The holy sabbath unto the LORD.” (Exodus 16:23 KJV)* Even to this day, God requires us to work and labor for six days and to rest one day in a week in obedience to His command and as an expression of faith that He will provide for us and sustain us as we honor Him and keep His Word.

*E. Our Lord is a God of Justice: “27 And it came to pass, that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none. 28 And the LORD said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws? 29 See, for that the LORD hath given you the sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. 30 So the people rested on the seventh day.” (Exodus 16:27-30 KJV)* Those who went out to gather out of their greed found none. God explained to them that they had already received their portion. *“See, for that the LORD hath given you the sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days.” (Exodus 16:29 KJV)*

Let us be honest and obedient to the principle that we need to work to satisfy our needs. *“11 And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your*

*own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; 12 That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.” (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 KJV)* God wants us to work so that we win the respect of others and be a good example for them to follow God and Jesus Christ as we endeavor to work. God does not want us to be an opportunist or merely a consumer, but a producer, who is effective and productive. **“And let our's also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful.” (Titus 3:14 KJV)** We need to use time, manpower, and the resources that we have to work it out. Let us start with whatever job is available --- planting, tending sheep, selling, carrying things, and so on, as long as we follow the principles of God’s Word, He will replenish our source of wealth.

Let us also not to be ashamed of the jobs our ancestors held, though they were menial in the eyes of the world. Some parents are ashamed of their employment because their jobs are not on par with other highly paid jobs. Being a farmer or a shepherd is not a highly-regarded profession like managerial jobs, medicine, or engineering. The Israelites were shepherds and that kind of profession was abominable to the world around them. When Joseph presented his family to Pharaoh, he instructed them to tell the truth that they were shepherds and he told them not to conceal their real profession, in order to receive what is due to them, to dwell in Goshen. **“31 And Joseph said unto his brethren, and unto his father's house, I will go up, and shew Pharaoh, and say unto him, My brethren, and my father's house, which were in the land of Canaan, are come unto me; 32 And the men are shepherds, for their trade hath been to feed cattle; and they have brought their flocks, and their herds, and all that they have. 33 And it shall come to pass, when Pharaoh shall call you, and shall say, What is your occupation? 34 That ye shall say, Thy servants' trade hath been about cattle from our youth even until now, both we, and also our fathers: that ye may dwell in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians.” (Genesis 46:31-34 KJV)** They did not deny their profession and the profession of their father and they did not abandon the flocks that God had entrusted to them just because others did not like their profession. Any profession that God has used to provide us should not be considered a shame. Tailoring, baking, babysitting, nursing, farming,

shepherding, driving, housekeeping, salesman, teacher, carpenter, goldsmithing, house painting, and many other professions may not be well accepted by the world, but as long as they provide an honest way of living and are entrusted to us by God, we should not be ashamed of them and we should not be ashamed that our children will continue to have such professions. As long as these professions are ordained by God for us and for our children, we will be sustained along our journey on this earth till the time we are move from this earth to eternity.

Goshen was the place that the Israelites occupied in Egypt because they were shepherds. It was a region in northern Egypt, east of the lower Nile, where the children of Israel lived from the time of Joseph to the time of Moses. The meaning of Goshen means “drawing near.” The jobs and the profession that God gives to us is to draw us closer to the target of our lives so that we live to serve Him and do His will; the jobs that He gives us are His provision to us.

Goshen was a place well protected by God, and the Israelites were well protected when He sent His plagues to Egypt. ***“And I will sever in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there; to the end thou mayest know that I am the LORD in the midst of the earth.” (Exodus 8:22 KJV) “25 And the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt all that was in the field, both man and beast; and the hail smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field. 26 Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, was there no hail.” (Exodus 9:25-26 KJV) “22 And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven; and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days: 23 They saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days: but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.” (Exodus 10:22-23 KJV)***

Therefore, we need to exercise God’s wisdom and consider it our duty to accommodate ourselves in the place and rank that has been given to us, and not to live outside it. Why can’t we be content with the lot of our fathers in the form of profession and resources and make it the lot of our children too if it is God’s will, and live according to it?

We should not crave for high positions and compare our supplies with other peoples' professions and income. God had given to us unique features and privileges that are different from others. Comparing ourselves with them will not serve any good but will cause confusion and we will be misled.

Nowadays people want to know how to increase their income, how to get involved in business, part-time jobs and promotional programs to increase their investment. But they are not willing to abide by the Biblical principles of good stewardship that would teach them to live without any lack even though on paper they don't hold big positions and earn big money.

Another good example of accepting whatever profession God has allocated to us and to our children is the example of the Rechabites. We can read below their testimony to the prophet Jeremiah:

***“6 But they said, We will drink no wine: for Jonadab the son of Rechab our father commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons for ever: 7 Neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any: but all your days ye shall dwell in tents; that ye may live many days in the land where ye be strangers.” (Jeremiah 35:6-7 KJV)*** The Rechabites are Kenites and they were the descendants of Hobab, Moses' father in law. Moses invited his father in law to stay with them and they would share with them whatever God would bless them with:

***“29 And Moses said unto Hobab, the son of Raguel the Midianite, Moses' father in law, We are journeying unto the place of which the LORD said, I will give it you: come thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the LORD hath spoken good concerning Israel.30 And he said unto him, I will not go; but I will depart to mine own land, and to my kindred.31 And he said, Leave us not, I pray thee; for as much as thou knowest how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and thou mayest be to us instead of eyes.32 And it shall be, if thou go with us, yea, it shall be, that what goodness the LORD shall do unto us, the same will we do unto thee.” (Numbers 10:29-32 KJV)***

***“And the children of the Kenite, Moses' father in law, went up out of the city of palm trees with the children of Judah into the wilderness of Judah, which lieth in the south of Arad; and they went and dwelt among the people.” (Judges 1:16)***

They obeyed Moses and stayed, but it seems they were not given a clear-cut inheritance; they were still strangers in the land and had no inheritance in it. Therefore they were instructed by their father Jonadab, the son of Rechab not to build houses and not to plant vineyards and settle but to live in tents because they were not given an inheritance: ***“Neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any: but all your days ye shall dwell in tents; that ye may live many days in the land where ye be strangers.” (Jeremiah 35:7 KJV)*** They were trained to live a hard life that would develop perseverance and endurance to enable them to pass through hardship in life. Since they chose for themselves to be part of the people of God, they became accustomed to living without an inheritance in the form of land to build and settle. For this very reason, the recommendation of Jonadab their father was introduced to them in order to enable them to live a hard life. Such kind of hard life would train them and make them ready to face hardships. Since this was ordained for them, they chose to continue in the profession of their fathers. His ancestors had acquainted themselves with a pastoral life ***“Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters: and they came and drew water, and filled the troughs to water their father's flock.” (Exodus 2:16 KJV)*** Such a profession might have been looked upon by some with contempt, but Jonadab thought it was the best to recommend to his descendants to depend on.

When the Rechabites abided by the will of God and the instruction that they received from their father, Jonadab son of Rechab, and continued in the profession and the kind of life that God had allocated to them, they were blessed by the Lord; they were well provided for and were preserved even during the most difficult times they had passed through.

Our lives on earth are the same as the Rechabites. We do not have an inheritance on earth to settle down. We live difficult lives and are expected to toil till the Lord comes and takes us to heaven. When we



get used to facing the harshness of life, we will learn to adjust and accommodate and with time it will become easy for us and we will be trained to live in such a way. We should not expect life to be smooth and embrace laziness. We need to be trained to face ‘the weariness, the fever and the fret of the world’ so that we can overcome problems easily.

Our lives on earth are temporary because our citizenship is in heaven. Therefore, we need to comply with God and submit to His will and we need to teach our children and be a good example to them in how to serve God. We need to be a good role model to our descendants and to instruct them on how to live so that they will continue to follow God and serve Him.

The Rechabites followed the instruction of their fathers. They abided by it and did not break it.

***“6 But they said, We will drink no wine: for Jonadab the son of Rechab our father commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons for ever: 7 Neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any: but all your days ye shall dwell in tents; that ye may live many days in the land where ye be strangers.” (Jeremiah 35:6-7 KJV)*** They avoided drinking wine and did not live a luxurious life. They lived in tents since they had no inheritance on earth and did not crave for worldly things.

As the Rechabites abided with the instructions they were rewarded by the Lord who promised them that they will continually have a man to stand for them before the Lord.

If we continue to abide by the instruction of God, then even though we will pass through difficult times in our lives, we will still be protected, for there is always someone to lead us in the right direction, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and God's church.

This promise was confirmed to the Rechabites by God in His temple through the prophet Jeremiah and in the presence of Hanan, the son of Igdaliah, a man of God:

***“18 And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according unto all that he hath commanded you: 19 Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me for ever.” (Jeremiah 35:18-19 KJV)***

Jobs and living conditions in life as we understand from the Scripture are ordained by God and we need to be content and glad about what God has given us. As we persevere to do our best with what God had given us, we can enjoy wealth and riches, material and spiritual blessings, that God would make available to us so that we can serve Him in a better way.

Regarding work, there is another point that we need to discuss. Every man has a certain capacity to work hard for a certain period of time. Some people 20 years and others probably 30 years or more. But after that, they will not be able to do as much hard work as they had done before because of the aging process. Based on this fact, every one of us should realize that the period of time assigned for hard work when we are able-bodied, is limited to certain numbers of years. Beyond these years we will not be able to work efficiently as before and soon it will be time for us to retire from service. We need to use the resources, the fruit of our labor, which we have accumulated over a period of time wisely. We need to save a portion of our income to meet our needs in our old age. God in the following Scriptures gave a description of that:

***“23 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 24 This is it that belongeth unto the Levites: from twenty and five years old and upward they shall go in to wait upon the service of the tabernacle of the congregation: 25 And from the age of fifty years they shall cease waiting upon the service thereof, and shall serve no more: 26 But shall minister with their brethren in the tabernacle of the congregation, to keep the charge, and shall do no service. Thus shalt thou do unto the Levites touching their charge.” (Numbers 8:23-26 KJV)*** God had outlined certain rules for the service in His sanctuary. From this Scripture we can conclude these points:

**A. The lower age limit:** *“from twenty and five years old and upward they shall go in to wait upon the service.” (Numbers 8:24 KJV)* The purpose of the age limit is to attain certain physical strength, maturity, understanding, and awareness of what the job description is. Previous to that, we suppose that was the period of education and training to prepare them and orient them about the upcoming task in their lives. We do the same for our children. We teach them, nurture them, educate them, and prepare them to work in the field that God had allocated for them.

**B. The period of hard service:** *“And from the age of fifty years they shall cease waiting upon the service thereof, and shall serve no more.” (Numbers 8:25 KJV)* The average limit that God set for hard work is 25 years. This will be the fruitful years for building and gaining financial capital and getting adequate and unique exposure and experience.

**C. The upper age limit for hard work:** *“And from the age of fifty years they shall cease waiting upon the service thereof, and shall serve no more.” (Numbers 8:25 KJV)* Beyond a certain age, there is no way we can work hard. This fact should be in our minds and in front of our eyes as we are planning for our lives, the lives of our families, our children, and our churches and congregations.

**D. The period of keeping the charge (supervision and consultancy):** *“But shall minister with their brethren in the tabernacle of the congregation, to keep the charge, and shall do no service.” (Numbers 8:26 KJV)* This is the period when you operate as a consultant and supervisor over the junior staff who need to do hard work.

**E. There is no retirement:** Supervision and consultancy will continue to the end until we are translated to heaven.

**F. The laws of God to labor:** *“Thus shalt thou do unto the Levites touching their charge.” (Numbers 8:26 KJV)* These instructions are what we need to adopt and abide by in our lives as well as the lives of our families and ministries.

At the time of David there was some adjustment made to this rule, starting from the youngsters (20 years old) because God had given rest to them and no more did they need to carry the ark, for God had allocated to them a place to place the ark and later on to build the temple.

***“24 These were the sons of Levi after the house of their fathers; even the chief of the fathers, as they were counted by number of names by their polls, that did the work for the service of the house of the LORD, from the age of twenty years and upward. 25 For David said, The LORD God of Israel hath given rest unto his people, that they may dwell in Jerusalem for ever: 26 And also unto the Levites; they shall no more carry the tabernacle, nor any vessels of it for the service thereof. 27 For by the last words of David the Levites were numbered from twenty years old and above: 28 Because their office was to wait on the sons of Aaron for the service of the house of the LORD, in the courts, and in the chambers, and in the purifying of all holy things, and the work of the service of the house of God.” (1 Chronicles 23:24-28 KJV)***

Jacob started doing hard work when he was seventy-seven years old. He worked twenty years and after that, he supervised his children and continued to do that supervisory work till his death. At the age of 147, he gave prophetic instructions to his descendants.

Joseph started doing hard work when he was seventeen years of age and shifted to being a consultant and supervisor at the age of thirty and continued to do that till he died at the age of hundred and ten.

Moses starts to work hard when he was 40 years old and he worked for 40 years and at the age of 80 was in charge and led the Israelites until he died at the age of 120.

David started to work hard at age 17 for 13 years and took charge as a supervisor at the age of 30 and continued until he died at the age of seventy.

I started my hard work at the age of 24 and reached the level of a supervisor at the age of 41 and am still at the job and will continue to do so until Jesus will take me with Him.

Those who continue to work hard and labor even in their old age due to the obligation of earning for their living, need to realize that there is something wrong and messy in their lives. They probably had wasted much of the fruit of their hard work and hadn't thought about saving for the rainy day. They had not been good stewards.

There is one more point that we need to discuss in regard to work and service. Some people enter God's service as an excuse for them to be away from doing any secular job. This is laziness and God does not approve such. We will use the example of David and the apostle Paul to discuss this important point.

David worked faithfully in his secular job. David, before God called him as king and shepherd for Israel, was working as a shepherd tending the sheep of his father. Did he work faithfully? Yes, and we can be sure of that by reading his story in *1 Samuel Chapters 16 and 17*.

One day God sent Samuel to Bethlehem to anoint David as king. Samuel invited Jesse and his sons for the sacrifice. David did not leave his job responsibility; he waited while caring for the sheep until Samuel called for him: ***“And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither.” (1 Samuel 16:11 KJV)***

King Saul also knew that David is a shepherd and he is attending his job well because he did mention when he sent for him. ***“Wherefore Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David thy son, which is with the sheep.” (1 Samuel 16:19 KJV)*** Here, David was called for service to the king's palace. ***“20 And Jesse took an ass laden with bread, and a bottle of wine, and a kid, and sent them by David his son unto Saul. 21 And David came to Saul, and stood before him: and he loved him greatly; and he became his***

***armourbearer.***” (1 Samuel 16:20-21 KJV) Part of David’s time was with the king and the other time was still with his secular job. David did not leave his job tending the sheep of his father. Instead, he continued to do in addition to the service that he was doing for King Saul which was a part of his service to God. ***“But David went and returned from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem.”*** (1 Samuel 17:15 KJV)

Another evidence that David did not leave his secular job when God called him is when his father sent him to look after his three brothers who were in the battlefield; he was still doing his job well, tending the sheep. ***“17 And Jesse said unto David his son, Take now for thy brethren an ephah of this parched corn, and these ten loaves, and run to the camp to thy brethren; 18 And carry these ten cheeses unto the captain of their thousand, and look how thy brethren fare, and take their pledge. 19 Now Saul, and they, and all the men of Israel, were in the valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines. 20 And David rose up early in the morning, and left the sheep with a keeper, and took, and went, as Jesse had commanded him; and he came to the trench, as the host was going forth to the fight, and shouted for the battle.”*** (1 Samuel 17:17-20 KJV) David here showed as well his concern to the secular work that he has when he was called to do God’s service. David put another shepherd in his place to care for the sheep, not leaving his job as many workers do without discretion.

Your secular job is your responsibility before God. Even when God called you for God’s service, you still need to attend well to your secular duty, because that is what God expects from you. You need to do your secular job well to avoid people’s criticism, especially those who are trying to find fault with you, as it happened to David when his brother accused him of negligence. ***“And Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spake unto the men; and Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why camest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle.”*** (1 Samuel 17:28 KJV)

David was excellent in his secular job and he achieved well. He was faithful to the task entrusted to him in protecting the sheep. He was

skilled, able, and always trusting God while fulfilling duty as shepherd of his father's flock. Thereafter, David offered himself to fight against Goliath. ***“33 And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth. 34 And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: 35 And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. 36 Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God. 37 David said moreover, The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the LORD be with thee.”*** (1 Samuel 17:33-37 KJV)

Like David, to anyone who is faithful and diligent in doing the secular job entrusted to him by God, surely God will also call him or her to render service in His Kingdom.

When God calls someone for service there will be a transition from a secular job to God's service or God's service and secular job together. Later when the worker is approved by God, the Lord Himself makes a way that that particular worker will be in full-time ministry. When that happens we can also clearly see the Lord's provision for that certain worker.

Apostle Paul was also an example for us who maintained the secular job while serving the Lord:

***A. “1After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. 2There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, 3and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them. 4Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.”*** (Acts 18:1-4)

***B. “You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions.” (Acts 20:34)***

Many whom God calls prematurely quit their secular job and their income without God’s signal for His provision to sustain them and the ministry. Such God’s workers with their wrong decisions suffer with their families and those who depend on them.

Your job is part of your ministry. You should be faithful and value your job as you love God and serve His purpose. God is the one who put you working where you are. When God wants you to be in full-time for God’s service, He will surely take you out from there by His own way. And where God leads, He provides as well with a surplus supply to support you. It is good to desire to be full-time in God’s service, but you should wait upon God to do it by Himself and in His time. Some seek to affiliate their ministries with some churches to get financial support, but that is not what the Scripture ordained. If you had quit your secular job and you are in financial need and the ministry that you are doing and the disciples that you are making are not sufficient to supply your need, then you need to go back to your secular job.

David, after his victory over Goliath, was taken permanently from tending the sheep and was placed in full-time God’s service. We read in *1 Samuel 18:2-5*, “***2 And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house. 3 Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. 4 And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle. 5 And David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, and behaved himself wisely: and Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants.***” (*1 Samuel 18:2-5 KJV*)

David did not resign or quit prematurely his job but was in line with God’s leading and direction. He served God’s purpose as he continued to be faithful to his job. The Word of God says, “***Also, that the soul be without knowledge, it is not good; and he that hasteth with his feet sinneth.***” (*Proverbs 19:2 KJV*) “***It is not good to have zeal without***



***knowledge, nor to be hasty and miss the way.” (Proverbs 19:2 NIV)***

So take heed, pray, and apply what you read in your life in order for you to be an effective worker and to secure enough income for you and for your family.

***II. Save and don't waste:*** Another right source of income is our savings. At certain times God gives us more because He wants us to save and not waste. Let this be our principle: *“The extra that we receive today is God’s provision for us for the future, so we need to save the extra.”*

***“6 Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: 7 Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, 8 Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.” (Proverbs 6: 6-8 KJV)*** God uses the ant to teach us to save and to store the excess that He gives us.

The art of saving that we learn from the example of the ant involves two main things:

- A. Gathering:** To particularly gather things rejected by others and assemble them together and also collect things lying around that will come in handy.
- B. Storing:** To properly store them and place them in a proper place from where we can take later when we need them.

The people who were left by the Chaldeans under Gedaliah were instructed to gather the summer fruits, and we can assume, it was to process it into grape juice, oil or dry fruit and to preserve it for the winter season. ***“9 And Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan sware unto them and to their men, saying, Fear not to serve the Chaldeans: dwell in the land, and serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you. 10 As for me, behold, I will dwell at Mizpah, to serve the Chaldeans, which will come unto us: but ye, gather ye wine, and summer fruits, and oil, and put them in your vessels, and dwell in your cities that ye have taken.” (Jeremiah 40:9-10 KJV)*** Most likely, these kinds of trees were naturally grown, and it was a blessing of God to gather their fruits and preserve them to be used for the winter season. The process of gathering and storing these fruits in a way was to preserve them over a period of time. This

is true wisdom and will prove to be beneficial to those who practice that. We need to do such things in our families; our children must be trained to do these things so that when they grow up, they will impart this method to their children. How wonderful a method it is to cut costs if we can process our juices, vinegar, jams, and sauces, instead of buying them at exorbitant prices.

Many people do not keep tools and small things in the house (papers, pens, calculators, watches, nails, screws, glue, ointments, shoes, slippers, clothes, toys, furniture, and so on) that will come in handy someday. They just discard them but later on when they are in need of these things, they have to pay a fortune. Such an attitude will result in a colossal loss of resources. We need to be creative in preserving whatever we have. We need to keep such things in certain places and label them and keep a list of them so when we need them, we can easily find them without wastage of time and money.

Even food can be preserved for a long time using different methods. Throughout history, God had taught people in different parts of the world to preserve different kinds of food, meat, fish, vegetable, fruit, and seeds by using salt, drying, freezing, preparing pickles, jams, molasses, and so on.

God commanded Noah to prepare, and preserve food for himself, his wife, and his three sons, for their wives and for the animals with him on the ark. ***“19 And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark, to keep them alive with thee; they shall be male and female. 20 Of fowls after their kind, and of cattle after their kind, of every creeping thing of the earth after his kind, two of every sort shall come unto thee, to keep them alive. 21 And take thou unto thee of all food that is eaten, and thou shalt gather it to thee; and it shall be for food for thee, and for them. 22 Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he.”*** (Genesis 6:19-22 KJV) It is part of our service to God that we need to know how to do such things for our near and dear ones.

In every country and nation in the world, there are one or more fruits or vegetables (a national plant or a national tree) that are available as food which is naturally grown and available to the people to pick and

eat. This will be another way of saving the natural resources. We can read in the Bible how Jesus went to the fig tree to eat. ***“18 Now in the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered. 19 And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away.”*** (Matthew 21:18-19 KJV) Jesus was hungry when He moved towards the fig tree and He wanted to make a meal of it. It seems that this was something people used to do if they were hungry. The Bible also tells us how the disciples picked up corn and ate. ***“At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn and to eat.”*** (Matthew 12:1 KJV) In the nation that I am living, dates of palm trees are abundant and we are free to pick from the trees. We gather a lot of fruit and store it after drying it in large amounts. We use it as candy or bake cake or cookies out of it.

Once, near my house, I was led by the Lord to a fig tree. In the place that I live in, it is not usual to find a fig tree but the Lord allowed it to happen. That tree was between two buildings and no one was caring for the tree and no one bothered to eat the fruit that had fallen down on the ground. On my daily walking exercise, I began to gather almost a pound of fruit. It was not very sweet in taste and that was probably one of the reasons why no one was interested in eating this fruit. The other reason could be that the fig is not well known in the area that I live. But I was glad that God had given me this healthy fruit, rich in minerals and vitamins. What did we use it for? We became creative and used our culinary skills to prepare delicious sweetmeats using dates and figs. The rest we dried and preserved as fruit for summer.

It is not only money that we need to save but even food, water, electricity, time, furniture, office supply, and other important miscellaneous items. After feeding the crowd of 5000 men, Jesus instructs his disciples how to save the remains so as to avoid wastage. ***“12 When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.13 Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten.”*** (John 6:12-13 KJV) Jesus satisfies our every need.

But after we are full, we should not waste what is left. Some people pile up food on their plates and waste it; they throw away meat and vegetables in the garbage at the cost of money. Wastage of any kind is sin and people who do it will be judged by the Lord. Some people throw away the extra food and drink without keeping it for the next meal after they ate it once. What they throw away may constitute 20 percent or more of their next meal and this is all waste of money and labor. Jesus does not want us to waste anything.

Even the instructions given during the feast of the Passover teaches us to save and not waste.

***“And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb.” (Exodus 12:4 KJV)*** So God did not want them to slaughter a lamb for one small family to consume and have excess. So He told them to share the lamb between two families. God instructed them to eat everything of the lamb and not to waste anything of it and in case they were not able to finish, they needed to burn it. ***“9 Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof. 10 And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire.” (Exodus 12:9-10 KJV)*** Nowadays when it comes to church celebrations, the church spends so much on food and in addition to that, much food is wasted and they consider it as a fellowship in God’s name. Spending lavishly as if we are honoring God, is not Scriptural. In fact, God had laid strict rules to minimize the wastage of food.

He mentioned in verse 9 that they need to eat it with the purtenance ***“Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof.” (Exodus 12:9 KJV)*** Purtenance means the inward parts of the lamb: lungs, kidneys, liver, spleen, and so on. It is clear that God does not want any part of it to be wasted.

In the Scripture, we can also read about the bread that was prepared every Sabbath to be used as food for a whole week for the descendants

of Aaron while they were doing their ministerial duties inside the tabernacle of God. ***“5 And thou shalt take fine flour, and bake twelve cakes thereof: two tenth deals shall be in one cake. 6 And thou shalt set them in two rows, six on a row, upon the pure table before the LORD. 7 And thou shalt put pure frankincense upon each row, that it may be on the bread for a memorial, even an offering made by fire unto the LORD. 8 Every sabbath he shall set it in order before the LORD continually, being taken from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant. 9 And it shall be Aaron's and his sons'; and they shall eat it in the holy place: for it is most holy unto him of the offerings of the LORD made by fire by a perpetual statute.”*** (Leviticus 24:5-9 KJV) The bread that was prepared was eaten over the week. They didn't complain about it being old and threw it away. Some people today don't prefer to eat old bread that was baked a few days ago, but they will throw it away and waste it while the Word of God teaches us not to do that.

Other ways of saving is when we recycle and reuse things. There are things that can be reused. Clothes, shoes, and sandals, for example, can be reused. The well-maintained clothes of older children can be reused for their younger siblings. Children can use the clothes of their parents. God spoke to Moses that the clothes of Aaron should be used by his son Eleazar. ***“25 Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and bring them up unto mount Hor: 26 And strip Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son: and Aaron shall be gathered unto his people, and shall die there. 27 And Moses did as the LORD commanded: and they went up into mount Hor in the sight of all the congregation. 28 And Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son; and Aaron died there in the top of the mount: and Moses and Eleazar came down from the mount.”*** (Numbers 20:25-28 KJV) It was the command of God that Eleazar was to use the clothes of Aaron his father. ***“And the holy garments of Aaron shall be his sons' after him, to be anointed therein, and to be consecrated in them.”*** (Exodus 29:29 KJV) God was very particular to recommend that and wanted it to be followed. There was much effort put in preparing all the parts of the clothes that Aaron was wearing, right from choice of material, to the skill involved and the time taken for the task. Nothing was to be wasted especially because the clothes were to be used for the next generation. The priestly garments of the anointed

ministers can be used after their completion of service on earth. Nowadays no one wishes to use their parent's clothes.

The soldiers who crucified Jesus took his clothes, ***“And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.” (Matthew 27:35 KJV)*** Most likely they reused them. Clothes that are in good shape and form are things that we need to reconsider before we throw away. Those who are quick to discard are poor in saving money.

Clothes in the Scripture were valued by the people. Clothes were precious plundering of war and the Scripture mentions that. Men would come late from a war at a certain time to divide the plunder and among it were the clothes.

The women calmed down Sisera's mother when he was late in coming back after the war, telling her that he was busy in dividing the spoil: ***“28 The mother of Sisera looked out at a window, and cried through the lattice, Why is his chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariots? 29 Her wise ladies answered her, yea, she returned answer to herself, 30 Have they not sped? have they not divided the prey; to every man a damsel or two; to Sisera a prey of divers colours, a prey of divers colours of needlework, of divers colours of needlework on both sides, meet for the necks of them that take the spoil?” (Judges 5:28-30 KJV)***

Achan coveted and took home with him a piece of the Babylonian garment from the plunder of Jericho. ***“When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it.” (Joshua 7:21 KJV)***

Clothes in the olden times were precious things. It is mentioned that Saul guarded the clothes of those who were stoning Stephan. ***“And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.” (Acts 7:58 KJV)*** Saul guarded their clothes so no one would steal them.

Clothes are precious things and we should not easily discard them. Paul requested Timothy to bring him his cloak that he had left with Carpus along with his books and the parchments. ***“The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments.” (2 Timothy 4:13 KJV)***

Even today, clothes are precious. Clothes, shoes, and other accessories are expensive these days and we need to be wise while shopping for them and maintain them in the best possible way. Clothes should be cleaned and pressed well to make us look presentable. It doesn't matter how old they are as long as they are maintained well and can be reused.

God's Word testifies about that: ***“And I have led you forty years in the wilderness: your clothes are not waxen old upon you, and thy shoe is not waxen old upon thy foot.” (Deuteronomy 29:5 KJV)*** If our clothes or shoes are not worn out, we can still continue to use them. We can apply the same principle to our mobiles, watches, wallets, purses, bags, and so on.

***“47 The garment also that the plague of leprosy is in, whether it be a woollen garment, or a linen garment; 48 Whether it be in the warp, or woof; of linen, or of woollen; whether in a skin, or in any thing made of skin; 49 And if the plague be greenish or reddish in the garment, or in the skin, either in the warp, or in the woof, or in any thing of skin; it is a plague of leprosy, and shall be shewed unto the priest: 50 And the priest shall look upon the plague, and shut up it that hath the plague seven days: 51 And he shall look on the plague on the seventh day: if the plague be spread in the garment, either in the warp, or in the woof, or in a skin, or in any work that is made of skin; the plague is a fretting leprosy; it is unclean. 52 He shall therefore burn that garment, whether warp or woof, in woollen or in linen, or any thing of skin, wherein the plague is: for it is a fretting leprosy; it shall be burnt in the fire. 53 And if the priest shall look, and, behold, the plague be not spread in the garment, either in the warp, or in the woof, or in any thing of skin; 54 Then the priest shall command that they wash the thing wherein the plague is, and he shall shut it up seven days more: 55 And the priest shall look on the***

*plague, after that it is washed: and, behold, if the plague have not changed his colour, and the plague be not spread; it is unclean; thou shalt burn it in the fire; it is fret inward, whether it be bare within or without. 56 And if the priest look, and, behold, the plague be somewhat dark after the washing of it; then he shall rend it out of the garment, or out of the skin, or out of the warp, or out of the woof: 57 And if it appear still in the garment, either in the warp, or in the woof, or in any thing of skin; it is a spreading plague: thou shalt burn that wherein the plague is with fire. 58 And the garment, either warp, or woof, or whatsoever thing of skin it be, which thou shalt wash, if the plague be departed from them, then it shall be washed the second time, and shall be clean. 59 This is the law of the plague of leprosy in a garment of woollen or linen, either in the warp, or woof, or any thing of skins, to pronounce it clean, or to pronounce it unclean.” (Leviticus 13:47-59 KJV)* In the laws concerning leprosy, the priest should examine the clothes that have been smeared with leprosy and he may need to re-examine them again to decide if they are clean or not before he decides that the clothes need to be burned. Clothes, garments, or skins are precious and expensive things and so God had placed rules to decide under what circumstances they needed to be burnt. Even now, God expects us to apply the rules from His Word concerning clothes, to decide under what circumstances we need to throw them away or destroy.

*“Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.” (James 3:13 KJV)* If we humble ourselves before God and before His Word and are willing to do His will by avoiding wastage and saving God’s provision, He will open our eyes and will show other things that can be reused.

Things in our houses and churches like clothes, shoes, toys, socks, books, laptops, mobiles, furniture, booklets, cables, lights, chairs, microphones, and musical instruments can be repaired and reused. We find people changing their mobiles and laptops periodically and without a valid reason and they are not aware it is all wastage of money. Their love for the new trend of gadgets has clouded their vision. We also find this happening in churches. They periodically upgrade their musical instruments, sound systems, and other



appliances to keep pace with the changing world, not realizing that it is an unnecessary expense and could very well be avoided. Other things in our houses and churches can be recycled to suit other purposes. Used papers can be used as scratch papers. Old papers can be used to make envelopes. For example, the envelopes that we use in our congregations for tithes and offerings are made from used papers. God will continue to give us the wisdom how to use things and manage our lives successfully with fewer expenses. Purchase of small, inexpensive items may not make us feel the pinch. But over a period of time, if we count the cost, it will certainly become a huge expenditure. Then we will certainly regret our foolish behavior and for not having saved that money for a rainy day. Some of us might be tempted to think and even to say, *'It is just a small amount of money.'* But if you calculate it for how many years you will do it, it will be a large sum of money that you can save and direct to do something noble. For example, a pair of inexpensive unbranded glasses can cost three dollars but we buy an expensive pair of glasses for 150 dollars just because it is branded. Then we change it every three to four years just because it became slightly worn out. A large amount of things that many people throw can be still used and reused; we need not to do the same what others are doing just to follow the trend. They will throw away a brand new thing just because they don't like the color or the design and for minor reasons will spend much money to buy a new thing. Let's not follow people who waste resources but show them the way to thrifty living. In this world, the business of second-hand goods is quite widespread. Goods like clothes, furniture, utensils, and electrical appliances are repaired and recycled and sold again. We as families, members, and workers in the Churches of God should be an exclusive business center encouraging people to reduce, recycle, and reuse the resources available in our hands.

Wisdom's instruction is to fear the Lord. Those who are humble and fear God will receive wisdom from God to manage life and the things entrusted to them in the best possible way. While those who do not fear God are proud and boastful, they will soon find their resources running dry. They will throw away things that God has placed in their hands as they consider them just average when in reality, they are valuable for the Master's use if they are preserved. Pride strips them of Godly wisdom, and for this reason, they are not able to value the

resources that God has placed in their hands. Their pride blinds them from seeing things in a godly way and from doing things pleasant to God. But those who are humble will have their eyes open to see the true worth of God's resources and use them for His glory. Below is a story of a humble person who feared God and used the humble resources that he had to do marvelous work for God.

***“7 Now when Ebedmelech the Ethiopian, one of the eunuchs which was in the king's house, heard that they had put Jeremiah in the dungeon; the king then sitting in the gate of Benjamin; 8 Ebedmelech went forth out of the king's house, and spake to the king saying, 9 My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet, whom they have cast into the dungeon; and he is like to die for hunger in the place where he is: for there is no more bread in the city. 10 Then the king commanded Ebedmelech the Ethiopian, saying, Take from hence thirty men with thee, and take up Jeremiah the prophet out of the dungeon, before he die. 11 So Ebedmelech took the men with him, and went into the house of the king under the treasury, and took thence old cast clouts and old rotten rags, and let them down by cords into the dungeon to Jeremiah. 12 And Ebedmelech the Ethiopian said unto Jeremiah, Put now these old cast clouts and rotten rags under thine armholes under the cords. And Jeremiah did so. 13 So they drew up Jeremiah with cords, and took him up out of the dungeon: and Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison.”***  
***(Jeremiah 38:7-13 KJV)***

Ebedmelech an Ethiopian eunuch was not one among the people of God but his heart was tender toward Jeremiah the prophet who was put in prison and his life was threatened because he was preaching to them the Word of God asking them to surrender to the Babylonians. Ebedmelech feared God and he took the initiative to approach King Zedekiah to save the life of Jeremiah. When he took the permission from the king, the king gave him thirty men to do it speedily and what this man used were old cast clouts and old rotten rags, and let them down by cords. Notice that he used old rotten rags. If it were someone else who had taken the king's approval, that someone probably would have used the most expensive and new clothes. Notice what the Scripture says where he went. ***“Into the house of the king under the***

***treasury, and took thence old cast clouts and old rotten rags.”*** (Jeremiah 38:11 KJV) The treasury was just nearby. Many today, will produce a lengthy list of extravagant things to buy and will spend lavishly making it a point to extract as much as they can from the treasury of the church when asked to do something. People who are humble and God-fearing will be willing to work and operate even with humble resources and at a minimum cost.

Ebedmelech was a compassionate man and was careful in his work. He did not throw the rotten rags to Jeremiah lest it fell into the mud but he, ***“Let them down by cords into the dungeon to Jeremiah.”*** (Jeremiah 38:11 KJV) He ensured that it was handed over to Jeremiah in a clean state, so he could put them clean under his armholes and later on take them out clean. He carefully instructed Jeremiah how to apply them. ***“And Ebedmelech the Ethiopian said unto Jeremiah, Put now these old cast clouts and rotten rags under thine armholes under the cords. And Jeremiah did so.”*** (Jeremiah 38:12 KJV) He instructed that to Jeremiah so his armholes would not be hurt by the cords.

Ebedmelech did not think of himself when he went to the king. He could have asked for the king’s favor and permission to take leave from Jerusalem to save his own life, but he trusted God and went forward to rescue Jeremiah. The Lord rewarded him for his good work and ministry. God promised that He would deliver him and save him. ***“15 Now the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah, while he was shut up in the court of the prison, saying, 16 Go and speak to Ebedmelech the Ethiopian, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring my words upon this city for evil, and not for good; and they shall be accomplished in that day before thee. 17 But I will deliver thee in that day, saith the LORD: and thou shalt not be given into the hand of the men of whom thou art afraid. 18 For I will surely deliver thee, and thou shalt not fall by the sword, but thy life shall be for a prey unto thee: because thou hast put thy trust in me, saith the LORD.”*** (Jeremiah 39:15-18 KJV)

The meaning of ‘Ebedmelech’ is ‘*servant of the king*’. We are the servants of the King of kings, the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, let us learn how to serve faithfully even with less and basic resources. Let us

learn to be less demanding in our service. Let us be good stewards of the material things that have been entrusted to us, and let us teach and develop in our children, disciples, and others who want to serve God with us, the skills of good stewardship.

When we homeschool the children in our church, we give them desktop computers Pentium 4 to work on. They have been used since 2004. They are handled carefully by students to do some of their lessons, to watch lab experiments, and to do certain exams.

Now let us read the story of the manger that became a cradle to a newborn baby.

***“1 And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. 2 (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) 3 And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. 4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) 5 To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. 6 And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. 7 And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.” (Luke 2:1-7 KJV)*** Jesus was born in a stable and was laid in a manger which by a definition is a trough or open box in a stable designed to hold feed or fodder for livestock. The manger was used by Joseph and Mary and they made it a bed for Jesus.

Old furniture can be adjusted and used for different purposes. In our church, we have a lot of furniture, sofas, chairs, tables, and cabinets that we had picked up from garbage dumps. We fixed the wood, cleaned, painted, fixed the upholstery and now they are put to good use.

Notice that Mary used swaddling clothes to wrap her newborn baby ***“And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no***

***room for them in the inn.” (Luke 2:1-7 KJV)*** Swaddling is an age-old practice of wrapping infants in blankets or sheets so that movement of the limbs is tightly restricted to keep the baby from being disturbed by his own startled reflex. It can also help the baby to stay warm. The swaddling clothes have another privilege over the ordinary infant clothes that are used nowadays. Technically, it can be prepared easily by the mother. It does not need to be replaced with a bigger size when the baby grows, and it does not need the mother to prepare the baby’s shoes and socks. So it is economically far better for the parents.

King Hiram, whose name also spelt Hiram, was the one who aided King David and King Solomon in their building of the Temple of God. Therefore after King Solomon had finished the building he rewarded King Hiram by giving him twenty cities.

***“10 And it came to pass at the end of twenty years, when Solomon had built the two houses, the house of the LORD, and the king’s house, 11 (Now Hiram the king of Tyre had furnished Solomon with cedar trees and fir trees, and with gold, according to all his desire,) that then king Solomon gave Hiram twenty cities in the land of Galilee. 12 And Hiram came out from Tyre to see the cities which Solomon had given him; and they pleased him not. 13 And he said, What cities are these which thou hast given me, my brother? And he called them the land of Cabul unto this day.” (1 Kings 9:10-13 KJV)***

The meaning of ‘Hiram’ (Hiram) is ‘Noble Born’, and he did noble things in his contribution to building the Temple of God and other important buildings. But what he did in response to what King Solomon gave was not noble. The twenty cities were located in a district in Galilee. He contemptuously called them ‘Cabul’ meaning ‘binding’. They were of no value to him and he did not take them and be in a binding relationship with King Solomon. Instead, he sent gold to King Solomon to convince him that he still hadn’t received anything from him, to undermine King Solomon’s gift and also to boast about his own worth. ***“And Hiram sent to the king six score talents of gold.” (1 Kings 9:14 KJV)***

But King Solomon used these twenty cities for a noble purpose as we can read here: ***“1 And it came to pass at the end of twenty years,***

*wherein Solomon had built the house of the LORD, and his own house, 2 That the cities which Hiram had restored to Solomon, Solomon built them, and caused the children of Israel to dwell there.” (2 Chronicles 8:1-2 KJV)* He prepared these cities and allowed people to live in them. When some people receive certain things that don't suit their standards, they refuse and return it. This is not good because what they return is what God is rewarding them with. God's intention of giving them such things is to bless them and to add to their wealth. But in the process of succumbing to pride and a choosy attitude, they lose God's wealth. Certain times we do the same when we are granted certain things as a reward for our hard work. We refuse to take them and as a result, lose out on God's reward.

As we read and examine the Scriptures, we will learn how to avoid wastage and be thrifty.

*“19 When thou shalt besiege a city a long time, in making war against it to take it, thou shalt not destroy the trees thereof by forcing an axe against them: for thou mayest eat of them, and thou shalt not cut them down (for the tree of the field is man's life) to employ them in the siege: 20 Only the trees which thou knowest that they be not trees for meat, thou shalt destroy and cut them down; and thou shalt build bulwarks against the city that maketh war with thee, until it be subdued.” (Deuteronomy 20:19-20 KJV)* God here taught the Israelites not to destroy the trees while they were waging war against the cities of their enemies. God wanted them to preserve the trees and segregate them for different purposes. Those trees that bore no fruit were to be cut and used for making a bulwark against that city. But those that bore fruit were not to be cut but to be used as source of food. Trees are part of nature and God wants us to preserve the natural resources and use them wisely *“For the tree of the field is man's life.” (Deuteronomy 20:19 KJV)*

When I teach people about good stewardship, I tell them the following:

“If today you spend unwisely, then your children will be affected in the future because of your debt. If you use water unwisely, then your children will have less water to use. ‘Wasting’ is one of the greatest enemies of mankind, an ally of the devil, and you should stop giving

him your resources. Wasting is to deprive yourself of good things by giving them to your enemies. Wasting is to deprive your descendants of good things and giving them instead to the devil to use them against you. When we waste resources, we allow the enemy to rob us of this privilege and also our descendants of theirs.”

King Hezekiah acted wisely when he did not allow water resources to go to his enemy, Sennacherib, the King of Assyria. ***“1 After these things, and the establishment thereof, Sennacherib king of Assyria came, and entered into Judah, and encamped against the fenced cities, and thought to win them for himself. 2 And when Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib was come, and that he was purposed to fight against Jerusalem, 3 He took counsel with his princes and his mighty men to stop the waters of the fountains which were without the city: and they did help him. 4 So there was gathered much people together, who stopped all the fountains, and the brook that ran through the midst of the land, saying, “Why should the kings of Assyria come, and find much water?” (2 Chronicles 32:1-4 KJV)***

***III. Investment:*** Is to put our money in a project or certain work and out of it, we will receive income. Let us read part of Jesus’ parable: ***“16 Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. 17 And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. 20 And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. 21 His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.” (Mathew 25:16-17, 20-21 KJV)*** Here in this parable, Jesus spoke about the Master who entrusted to His servants’ certain number of talents. They invested it in a certain business and they brought the profit to the master. This is the principle of investment. Investment is to use our money and not our effort or time. When we invest our money into a business, we need to make sure that there is no loophole to lose our principal amount. If the initial capital is lost or not secure, then this type of investment is not from God. Some people or banks may ask us to invest in something. If we get them to sign the agreement that our capital will be untouched, then we can go ahead

with the assurance that it is a blessing from God. But if there is the possibility of losing the capital, then we don't go ahead. Unless our capital is secure, we mustn't venture to invest.

If we are working and having an income coming in, then we should save rather than invest our money in a business. We just need to save to earn interest.

If we have a capital and don't have work or income, then the best thing to do is not use our money to start a new business. It is better to preserve our capital and deposit it in a bank to earn interest. For our living, we can depend on our talent, effort and time rather than the capital. This is more secure.

Rarely is it advisable to invest our money in business to earn our living. But if we do, it must be approved by God. Moreover, we need to be knowledgeable about the business that we're planning to get involved in and be well versed in its ins and outs.

It is also not advisable to use our money to buy a land or a farm or a house that we have no intention to live in. Many think that it is a good investment to buy such things because they think the prices will soar high in the days to come and they will make a profit. They think they can rent or sell the house or the land and get some income. In reality, we need to have our money with us so that when we need it, it is available. If we invest our money in a house, land, or farm, the time that we need it, it will not be possible. We will lose out on the value of the property if we sell in haste. In addition to this, when we rent a house, it could be ruined by the tenants and at the time we want to move into it, we would have to pay heavily for restoring it back to shape. The best thing to do is to deposit our capital in a bank and get an interest so that at any time we need to buy our own house, our money will be accessible.

***IV. Interest:*** Another way to get extra money is to deposit our money in the bank and receive a certain percentage of interest. The Lord Jesus also recommended that ***“Thou oughtiest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.”*** (Mathew 25:27 KJV) Interest is



when we put our money in the bank as a fixed deposit and get some profit. It is like an investment but with little profit.

When we lend money to others who are brethren of our faith, it should be without usury or interest.

***“If thou lend money to any of my people that is poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as an usurer, neither shalt thou lay upon him usury.” (Exodus 22:25 KJV)***

***“35 And if thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee; then thou shalt relieve him: yea, though he be a stranger, or a sojourner; that he may live with thee. 36 Take thou no usury of him, or increase: but fear thy God; that thy brother may live with thee. 37 Thou shalt not give him thy money upon usury, nor lend him thy victuals for increase.” (Leviticus 25:35-37 KJV)***

***“Thou shalt not lend upon usury to thy brother; usury of money, usury of victuals, usury of any thing that is lent upon usury.” (Deuteronomy 23:19 KJV)***

To the stranger, the Scriptures allow us to lend with usury, ***“Unto a stranger thou shalt lend upon usury; but unto thy brother thou shalt not lend upon usury: that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all that thou settest thine hand to in the land whither thou goest to possess it.” (Deuteronomy 23:20)*** What I recommend in regard to lending upon usury to the stranger is not to do it, because it may cause us troubles and get us entangled in civilian issues. Besides, we are not running a bank and so we would not be able to defend ourselves before authorities in case of trouble. What I recommend is that if a brother or sister among us has some money he/she does not need, then he/she can deposit it in a bank and receive a reasonable interest which will fetch an additional saving rather than lend upon usury. Then, we will not be questioned as to its legality. ***“No man that warreth entangled himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.” (2 Timothy 2:4 KJV)***

***V. Inheritance:*** We may receive money, estates, and treasures from our fathers. ***“House and riches are the inheritance of fathers: and a***

*prudent wife is from the LORD.” (Proverbs 19:14 KJV) And this is one of the ways that God blesses us.*

Isaac received as an inheritance from Abraham all that Abraham had. *“35 And the LORD hath blessed my master greatly; and he is become great: and he hath given him flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and menservants, and maidservants, and camels, and asses. 36 And Sarah my master's wife bare a son to my master when she was old: and unto him hath he given all that he hath.” (Genesis 24:35-36 KJV) Isaac inherited the tent of his mother, and he brought Rebekah into it and made her his wife, “And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.” (Genesis 24:67 KJV)*

The Lord gave the Promised Land to His people as their inheritance, and they would give the Land after their death to their children.

*“8 And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a man die, and have no son, then ye shall cause his inheritance to pass unto his daughter. 9 And if he have no daughter, then ye shall give his inheritance unto his brethren. 10 And if he have no brethren, then ye shall give his inheritance unto his father's brethren. 11 And if his father have no brethren, then ye shall give his inheritance unto his kinsman that is next to him of his family, and he shall possess it: and it shall be unto the children of Israel a statute of judgment, as the LORD commanded Moses.” (Numbers 27:8-11 KJV)*

At that time God had put various rules for the inheritance to pass from those who are dead to those who are alive. Now, we have rules laid out by the government of the various countries we belong to, clearly stating how to receive what is allocated to us.

We inherit things from our parents and we must thank God for what we receive as He blesses us with additional blessings. We should not relax or start to squander if we receive an inheritance. God still wants us to continue to be diligent and do our work sincerely because what God has given us as an inheritance is not only for us but also something we need to hand over to our children. Inheritance will help

our children to pursue their lives, to be settled, and to raise families to pass on the blessing.

We should not fight or indulge in strife in order to get the inheritance. If our parents have put something in our names or it has come to us according to the government rules then this is from God. But if not, we should not quarrel with our brothers and sisters and other relatives for the inheritance. ***“13 And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. 14 And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? 15 And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.” (Luke 12:13-15 KJV)***

Jesus will bless us. We need not fight for an inheritance; instead, we just need to trust Him. ***“But godliness with contentment is great gain.” (1 Timothy 6:6 KJV) “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” (Hebrews 13:5 KJV)*** Let us be content with what the Lord has given us. We need to trust Him and fix our eyes unto Him and He will bless us. ***“They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed.” (Psalm 34:5 KJV)***

# Chapter Five

## *Wrong Resources for Money*

*“6 But godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. 8 And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. 9 But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10 For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” (1 Timothy 6:6-10 KJV)*

Money is only one of the blessings that God has given to man so that he can use it to meet his daily needs. God has richly provided us with everything we need for our enjoyment. Nevertheless, Jesus also warned us about greed. *“And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.” (Luke 12:15 KJV)* He also told us that our focus to have treasures in heaven: *“19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: 20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: 21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” (Matthew 6:19-21 KJV)* God wants our heart fixed on loving Him rather than money. The previous chapter outlines the right ways to receive money and material blessings. We should also be aware that there are wrong ways to collect and to receive money and we should avoid them.

Given below are some of the devilish ways employed to take money from wrong sources and this can pave the way for our destruction.

***I. Stealing:*** *“Neither shalt thou steal.” (Deuteronomy 5:19 KJV)* Stealing is taking things that don't belong to us without permission. Stealing is unacceptable, and many condemn it; yet we still find some

practicing it. We will study a few Scripture verses from the Bible that talk about stealing.

**A. The bad effects of stealing on the person who practices it:**

1. *“30 Men do not despise a thief, if he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry; 31 But if he be found, he shall restore sevenfold; he shall give all the substance of his house.” (Proverbs 6:30-31 KJV)* According to what we have read, the thief needs to pay back seven times for what he has stolen, and this may cost him all his wealth.

2. *“If a man shall steal an ox, or a sheep, and kill it, or sell it; he shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep.” (Exodus 22:1 KJV)* According to what we have read, the thief needs to pay back five times what he has stolen.

3. *“If a thief be found breaking up, and be smitten that he die, there shall no blood be shed for him.” (Exodus 22:2 KJV)* According to what we have read, the thief may lose his life on the spot.

4. *“If the sun be risen upon him, there shall be blood shed for him; for he should make full restitution; if he have nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft.” (Exodus 22:3 KJV)* According to what we have read, the thief might be sold to make restitution.

5. *“If the theft be certainly found in his hand alive, whether it be ox, or ass, or sheep; he shall restore double.” (Exodus 22:4 KJV)* According to what we have read, the thief needs to pay back double the amount he has stolen.

6. *“4 And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him. 5 And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die: 6 And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.” (2 Samuel 12:4-6 KJV)* According to

what we have read, the thief may need to pay back four times what he has stolen.

So, what we conclude from the Scriptures above is that the penalty to be paid by the thief will certainly be more than what he has stolen. Stealing will not be of any use to him, but will be a burden and will cost him more than he would have gained. This is what the Word of God tells us. ***“17 Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant. 18 But he knoweth not that the dead are there; and that her guests are in the depths of hell.” (Proverbs 9:17-18 KJV)*** Stealing destroys the homes of those who steal. ***“3 Then said he unto me, This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth: for every one that stealeth shall be cut off as on this side according to it; and every one that sweareth shall be cut off as on that side according to it. 4 I will bring it forth, saith the LORD of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by my name: and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it with the timber thereof and the stones thereof.” (Zechariah 5:3-4 KJV)*** God will curse the house of the person who steals.

Therefore, we need to pay heed to the bad effects of stealing as mentioned in the Scriptures and never do it. Stealing will bring a curse and will rob us of God’s blessing.

***B. The different forms of stealing are laid out in the following Scriptures:***

***1. Stealing from parents: “Whoso robbeth his father or his mother, and saith, It is no transgression; the same is the companion of a destroyer.” (Proverbs 28:24 KJV)*** Many take advantage of their parents and try to abuse them or make them spend more on them. They claim that what their parents have is rightfully theirs. That is not correct. What our parents have belongs to God and they are stewards of what the Lord has given them. Therefore, we cannot grab anything from them on the grounds that we are their children. This is nothing but stealing.

**2. Stealing land:** *“Thou shalt not remove thy neighbor’s landmark, which they of old time have set in thine inheritance, which thou shalt inherit in the land that the LORD thy God giveth thee to possess it.” (Deuteronomy 19:14 KJV)* In the past, people used stones to erect a boundary between one person’s land and another’s. So, those who intended to steal would move the boundary stone toward their neighbor to increase their land and their territory. This is stealing and will bring a curse on those who do this as we can read, *“Cursed be he that removeth his neighbour’s landmark. And all the people shall say, Amen.” (Deuteronomy 27:17 KJV)* Therefore, *“Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set.” (Proverbs 22:28 KJV)*

**3. Taking advantage of orphans and widows:** *“10 Remove not the old landmark; and enter not into the fields of the fatherless: 11 For their redeemer is mighty; he shall plead their cause with thee.” (Proverbs 23:10-11 KJV)* There are people who take advantage of widows and orphans because they are weak. They think they have no one to lean on, forgetting that the Lord is there, watching the affairs of their lives and that He will be the one to support them and defend them.

**4. Stealing flocks:** *“2 Some remove the landmarks; they violently take away flocks, and feed thereof. 3 They drive away the ass of the fatherless, they take the widow’s ox for a pledge.” (Job 24:2-3 KJV)* Another form of stealing is taking sheep and flocks and taking advantage of widows and orphans. Today, there are people who steal ministries and lead people the wrong way. But God will not excuse those who use lies and deceit to steal flocks and even those who steal ministries: *“23 Though it be given him to be in safety, whereon he resteth; yet his eyes are upon their ways. 24 They are exalted for a little while, but are gone and brought low; they are taken out of the way as all other, and cut off as the tops of the ears of corn. 25 And if it be not so now, who will make me a liar, and make my speech nothing worth?” (Job 24:23-25 KJV)*

**5. Taking advantage of others:** *“Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.” (Ephesians 4:28 KJV)* There are people who do not want to work but prefer to live like

parasites, feeding on others. This is stealing. The Scriptures warn us against this: ***“That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified.”*** (1 Thessalonians 4:6 KJV) There are workers who claim to serve the Lord but are actually taking advantage of the church members or using them for their own purpose. They use their brothers and sisters in Christ to give them service without remuneration. We are warned not to do that. ***“Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him: the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning.”*** (Leviticus 19:13 KJV) ***“Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbour's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work.”*** (Jeremiah 22:13 KJV) When we utilize the services of our brothers and sisters for our personal needs, we need to pay them. Samuel was free from this sin. He served God without taking advantage of the people. ***“3 Behold, here I am: witness against me before the LORD, and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you. 4 And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken ought of any man's hand.”*** (1 Samuel 12:3-4 KJV) Likewise, Apostle Paul did not defraud the brethren of the churches that he was the overseer of. ***“Receive us; we have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man.”*** (2 Corinthians 7:2 KJV) Neither did Titus, Paul's co-worker, take advantage of the brethren. ***“I desired Titus, and with him I sent a brother. Did Titus make a gain of you? walked we not in the same spirit? walked we not in the same steps?”*** (2 Corinthians 12:18 KJV) We too must walk in the steps of Samuel, Paul, and Titus while serving the Lord.

***6. Stealing from the masters and from the government: “9 Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again; 10 Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.”*** (Titus 2:9-10 KJV) There are people who steal from their masters and from their workplaces. Some justify their actions by saying that their masters are rich and so there is no problem



if they take something from the abundant supply of their masters' goods. But this is stealing, and it will affect not only the masters but also the thieves because it is sin and will bring a curse upon their life. Some say that stealing from the government is right because the government is rich and is exploiting the people by levying heavy taxes. However, this is also stealing and will bring trouble to those who do it.

**7. Not paying taxes and government fees:** *“20 And they watched him, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor. 21 And they asked him, saying, Master, we know that thou sayest and teachest rightly, neither acceptest thou the person of any, but teachest the way of God truly: 22 Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Caesar, or no? 23 But he perceived their craftiness, and said unto them, Why tempt ye me? 24 Shew me a penny. Whose image and superscription hath it? They answered and said, Caesar's. 25 And he said unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's.” (Luke 20:20-25 KJV)* We ought to be honest with the government to show that we are honest with God. What is due to the government in the form of taxes or fees must be paid. *“6 For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. 7 Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.” (Romans 13:6-7 KJV)*

**8. Borrowing and not returning:** *“The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again: but the righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth.” (Psalm 37:21 KJV)* Another form of stealing is when people borrow something (usually money) but never return it. Sometimes, people lend money to another person only to find that the borrower has suddenly disappeared with the money. All the people who had lent him money previously will then complain and regret ever giving him anything. There are people who join churches to borrow money and then run away. In the churches that I oversee, I have instructed the leaders and members not to lend without the knowledge of the church to avoid such kind of trouble.

There is another way of borrowing and not paying back. This is by taking a large loan from a bank and then leaving the country without paying it back. Some think that this is not sin because they are not stealing from people but from a bank. This is not right. It is still a sin. In certain countries, some loans were given on the principle of canceling the debt after seven years had passed. ***“1 At the end of every seven years thou shalt make a release. 2 And this is the manner of the release: Every creditor that lendeth ought unto his neighbour shall release it; he shall not exact it of his neighbour, or of his brother; because it is called the LORD's release. 3 Of a foreigner thou mayest exact it again: but that which is thine with thy brother thine hand shall release.” (Deuteronomy 15:1-3 KJV)*** Some will make use of privileges like medical services or educational services but won't pay back until their debts are canceled at the end of the seven years. That is also wickedness and God will judge them for that.

***9. Not paying the workers their wages:*** Even delayed payment is a sin because a person's life is dependent on their income. ***“Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him: the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning.” (Leviticus 19:13 KJV)*** ***“1 Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. 2 Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. 3 Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. 4 Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth.” (James 5:1-4 KJV)*** When people fail to give the workers whom they have hired their wages, they are stealing from them. Some rich people take advantage of their workers and deprive them of their rights because they think that they don't have the power to fight for their rights. They may deny them insurance, medical support, leaves, or other privileges. ***“22 Rob not the poor, because he is poor: neither oppress the afflicted in the gate: 23 For the LORD will plead their cause, and spoil the soul of those that spoiled them.” (Proverbs 22:22-23 KJV)*** God's Word warns us from doing such evil things against people who are poor and weak.

**10. Not paying tithes in full and failing to bring offerings and the firstfruits:** *“8 Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. 9 Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.” (Malachi 3:8-9 KJV) “And he said unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's.” (Luke 20:25 KJV)* Failing to bring our tithes and offerings and our firstfruits to the Lord’s storehouse is another kind of stealing. We are literally robbing God. *“Thou shalt not delay to offer the first of thy ripe fruits, and of thy liquors: the firstborn of thy sons shalt thou give unto me.” (Exodus 22:29 KJV)*

**11. Taking money from the treasury:** *“He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.” (John 12:6)* Judas Iscariot had been taking money out of the treasury without permission. Taking money out of the treasury of the church without the knowledge and approval of the church is another form of stealing. Many church leaders take people’s tithes and offerings and put them directly into their pockets without maintaining a proper record of the money collected in the church. They consider the treasury money as their personal pocket money. This is another form of stealing and will bring a curse on those who indulge in it. This what Paul spoke about those who do this, *“21 Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? 22 Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? 23 Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? 24 For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written.” (Romans 2L21-24 KJV)* These kinds of pastors who covet money, are keen to minister to the rich and influential and do their best to make them join their ministry in order to benefit from them financially. They are like Balaam who was enticed to go with Balak’s men for a reward. *“And ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward.” (Jude 1:11 KJV)* Such pastors who are looking for financial gain have no credibility and do not stand on God’s principles. They are greedy and dangerous. They are like Ishmael the son of Nethaniah. *“4 And it came to pass the second day after he had slain*

*Gedaliah, and no man knew it, 5 That there came certain from Shechem, from Shiloh, and from Samaria, even fourscore men, having their beards shaven, and their clothes rent, and having cut themselves, with offerings and incense in their hand, to bring them to the house of the LORD. 6 And Ishmael the son of Nethaniah went forth from Mizpah to meet them, weeping all along as he went: and it came to pass, as he met them, he said unto them, Come to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam. 7 And it was so, when they came into the midst of the city, that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah slew them, and cast them into the midst of the pit, he, and the men that were with him. 8 But ten men were found among them that said unto Ishmael, Slay us not: for we have treasures in the field, of wheat, and of barley, and of oil, and of honey. So he forbore, and slew them not among their brethren.” (Jeremiah 41:4-8 KJV)* Ishmael the son of Nethaniah slew the men who were coming to the house of God and took from them the offerings they had brought. However, he spared ten men from among them, not out of mercy but out of covetousness, when they told him that they *“Have treasures in the field, of wheat, and of barley, and of oil, and of honey.” (Jeremiah 41:8 KJV)* He spared them to get hold of all the provisions that they had hidden in the field.

*“Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the LORD are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.” (Hosea 14:9 KJV)* The stolen money will finally waste away and cause trouble to those who have it. Stolen money and resources obtained from cheating in the work spot, intentionally selling defective products, cheating workers of their wages, and not paying bills will end up being a curse to those who seek to gain them.

**II. Usury:** It is the practice of making unethical or immoral monetary loans that unfairly enrich the lender. It is to lend money or other things which are to be returned with an additional percentage either on a daily basis or monthly basis and it can be one fifth or more of the capital which is a huge amount of money. Those who are in urgent need of money are charged a huge interest for the money they had borrowed. This is sheer exploitation of the helplessness of people in need. You find them paying the huge interest every month but the

capital that they had borrowed is still to be paid. Their blood is sucked by the money lenders. Those who practice and live on usury will be cursed and will not enjoy eternal life unless they repent. ***“1 Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? 5 He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved.”*** (Psalm 15:1, 5 KJV)

***“19 Thou shalt not lend upon usury to thy brother; usury of money, usury of victuals, usury of any thing that is lent upon usury:”*** (Deuteronomy 23:19 KJV) At the time of Nehemiah, the people complained and expressed their suffering and the bondage that they were in because of usury lent upon them by the fellow Israelites. Nehemiah faced the people who practiced usury and challenged them to repent and correct the situation or they would be shaken out from the house of God. Read the following: ***“1 And there was a great cry of the people and of their wives against their brethren the Jews. 2 For there were that said, We, our sons, and our daughters, are many: therefore we take up corn for them, that we may eat, and live. 3 Some also there were that said, We have mortgaged our lands, vineyards, and houses, that we might buy corn, because of the dearth. 4 There were also that said, We have borrowed money for the king's tribute, and that upon our lands and vineyards. 5 Yet now our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children: and, lo, we bring into bondage our sons and our daughters to be servants, and some of our daughters are brought unto bondage already: neither is it in our power to redeem them; for other men have our lands and vineyards. 6 And I was very angry when I heard their cry and these words. 7 Then I consulted with myself, and I rebuked the nobles, and the rulers, and said unto them, Ye exact usury, every one of his brother. And I set a great assembly against them. 8 And I said unto them, We after our ability have redeemed our brethren the Jews, which were sold unto the heathen; and will ye even sell your brethren? or shall they be sold unto us? Then held they their peace, and found nothing to answer. 9 Also I said, It is not good that ye do: ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies? 10 I likewise, and my brethren, and my servants, might exact of them money and corn: I pray you, let us leave off this usury. 11 Restore, I pray you, to them,***

*even this day, their lands, their vineyards, their oliveyards, and their houses, also the hundredth part of the money, and of the corn, the wine, and the oil, that ye exact of them. 12 Then said they, We will restore them, and will require nothing of them; so will we do as thou sayest. Then I called the priests, and took an oath of them, that they should do according to this promise. 13 Also I shook my lap, and said, So God shake out every man from his house, and from his labour, that performeth not this promise, even thus be he shaken out, and emptied. And all the congregation said, Amen, and praised the LORD. And the people did according to this promise.”* (Nehemiah 5:1-13 KJV) Those who were unwilling to comply with the calling of God, which was to stop indulging in usury, were cleared, faced, and told by Nehemiah, “*So God shake out every man from his house, and from his labour, that performeth not this promise, even thus be he shaken out, and emptied.*” (Nehemiah 5:13 KJV) Those who continue to practice usury will not enter into the kingdom of God unless they repent.

**III. Bribery:** It is the crime of giving someone money, gifts, or something else of value, often illegally, to persuade that person to do something you want or give you something that you don’t deserve. Those who offer bribes are taking away the rights of other people using their money. We cannot use money to take what God has not ordained for us to receive. Sometimes people bribe us and give us some money to get from us what is not due to them. Therefore, “***Do not pervert justice or show partiality. Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous.***” (Deuteronomy 16:19 NIV) “*Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous.*” (Deuteronomy 16:19 KJV) “*For the congregation of hypocrites shall be desolate, and fire shall consume the tabernacles of bribery.*” (Job 15:34 KJV) “***6 I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O LORD: 7 That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works. 8 LORD, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth. 9 Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men: 10 In whose hands is mischief, and their right hand is full of bribes. 11 But as for me, I will walk in***

*mine integrity: redeem me, and be merciful unto me.” (Psalm 26:6-11 KJV) “15 He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; 16 He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.” (Isaiah 33:15-16 KJV) “11 Forasmuch therefore as your treading is upon the poor, and ye take from him burdens of wheat: ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink wine of them. 12 For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right.” (Amos 5:11-12 KJV)*

I never receive gifts from church members and if anyone does offer money as an offering or love gift, I add it to the church collection under the person’s name. Why I don’t receive gifts is because of the following reasons: first, in their offering, they might include the tithe. If I use that, it would prevent God from opening the floodgates of heaven and blessing the people who gave. In that case, I would cause harm to the people who have offered and harm to myself by robbing God. Second, if someone offers you a gift, you are indebted to him as he has done you a favor. You will be obliged to pay back in some form or the other. If the person needs correction, it will be difficult to teach or correct him and he may even get offended for correcting him because he might think you shouldn’t since he had given you a gift. I teach and instruct the ministers and workers under my care not to receive gifts and if somebody offers them money, then they should add it to the church account in the person’s name so that if it is tithe or firstfruit or offering, then God will bless that person according to his conduct.

Paul did not offer a bribe. Even when he was in prison, he was kept by Governor Felix who expected Paul to give him some money. But Paul stood firm and endured suffering without compromising, in order to keep the testimony. *“24 And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. 25 And as he reasoned of*

*righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee. 26 He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him. 27 But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix' room: and Felix, willing to shew the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.” (Acts 24:24-27 KJV)* Money can play a dirty role in our lives and that is why we need to be cautious neither to give nor to receive bribes.

**IV. Fraud:** It is wrongful or criminal deception intended to result in a financial or personal gain. It is to show a faked document as original in order to gain a privilege. *“Bread of deceit is sweet to a man; but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel.” (Proverbs 20:17 KJV)* Faked documents or certificates may help us to get a job or a certain position. At the beginning, we might enjoy the benefits and progress but later on we have to bear the consequences of this sin. What we think as something good would, later on, turn bitter in our lives and mouth. By indulging in fraudulent methods, money can be multiplied, but later on, there can be destructive consequences. Moreover, this type of income will yield no fruit or blessing because God will never bless wickedness.

**V. Corrupt businesses:** There are certain jobs and businesses that produce income but they are not the right channels of God’s blessing for us. Examples of such businesses are prostitution, drug trafficking, running bars and nightclubs, smuggling, under the table transactions, and so on. *“19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? 20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20 KJV)* The income that comes from such businesses is not from God but from the devil.

**VI. Gambling:** It is to gain money and profits by playing certain games like poker and indulging in cock-fighting, racing, betting, lotteries, raffles, and so on. God has commanded us to work hard in order for us to eat the fruit of our labor. *“For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither*



*should he eat.” (2 Thessalonians 3:10 KJV) Gambling promotes laziness and slackness.*

Every work provides service but gambling provides no real service to man. To the contrary, it might harm others when they are losing their money and their resources of living. Any person who gets engaged in gambling is intentionally aiming to harm his neighbor by causing him a loss in his finances. Harming others is against the Scripture of God: *“Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.” (Romans 13:10 KJV) “If ye fulfil the royal law according to the Scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well.” (James 2:8 KJV) Gambling is selfishness. God does not want us to get our food and provide for our needs through someone else who lost his money in a game with us. This is not reflecting the image of God.*

***VII. Cheating and extortion: “1 Thus hath the Lord GOD shewed unto me: and behold a basket of summer fruit. 2 And he said, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A basket of summer fruit. Then said the LORD unto me, The end is come upon my people of Israel; I will not again pass by them any more. 3 And the songs of the temple shall be howlings in that day, saith the Lord GOD: there shall be many dead bodies in every place; they shall cast them forth with silence. 4 Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail, 5 Saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit? 6 That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat? 7 The LORD hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works. 8 Shall not the land tremble for this, and every one mourn that dwelleth therein? and it shall rise up wholly as a flood; and it shall be cast out and drowned, as by the flood of Egypt. 9 And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord GOD, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day: 10 And I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; and I will bring up sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness upon every head; and I will make it as the mourning of an only son, and the end thereof as a bitter day. 11 Behold, the days***

*come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: 12 And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it. 13 In that day shall the fair virgins and young men faint for thirst. 14 They that swear by the sin of Samaria, and say, Thy god, O Dan, liveth; and, The manner of Beersheba liveth; even they shall fall, and never rise up again.”* (Amos 8:1- 14 KJV) Cheating and extortion are what the Lord here is combating with, in the prophecy of Amos. The deceitful people were bent on using false measures to falsify the balances to swallow up the needy. They used their own power and authority to extort the poor of the land. Not only that, they sold the refuse of the wheat at the same price as the good one. **“Sell the refuse of the wheat?”** (Amos 8:6 KJV) That was another thing that was disgusting to the Lord and ignited His anger. True justice to the poor and needy and offering them their rights is what the Word of God declares clearly and profoundly. It was the believers who indulged in wickedness, for they were **“Saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat.”** (Amos 8:5 KJV) They were waiting for the new moon and the Sabbath to end, to resort to wrong ways of earning money. They didn’t work to serve others and earn their living but they nursed wickedness in their heart. **“Making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit? 6 That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat?”** (Amos 8:5-6 KJV) They didn’t fear God nor did they have respect for man. Their thoughts were dishonorable in their service to other men. When church members observe such principles in their lives, that demonstrates their unwillingness to follow God and their total rejection of His Word; it will result in God shutting their ears to His Word. Since they refuse to repent and change their ways of dealing with people, the Lord shall not provide relief to them. Even if they go and seek counsel or advice to get relief from their financial restraints (debts, loans, bankruptcy), the Lord will not allow them to hear the solutions for their troubles. God will deal with such Christians and with such churches firmly and inflict discipline on them. He will take away His blessings from them and cause them to stagger under financial constraint and famine of God’s Word in their lives.

After having studied the wrong sources for finances, we need to understand that Satan sometimes may give us material things through wrong resources but these will be used to cripple and destroy us. So let us be alert and self-controlled; refusing to accept money that does not come from God. Abram earlier in his life refused to take from the king of Sodom more than what was due to his men. The king of Sodom wanted to give the goods to Abram and to take the people from him. ***“21 And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself.” 22 And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth,23 That I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich:24 Save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men which went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion.” (Genesis 14:21-24 KJV)***

Let us, therefore, be self-controlled and alert and not be deceived and enticed to receive money from wrong sources and entangle ourselves with sin and curses. ***“8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: 9 Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.”(1 Peter 5:8-9 KJV)***

## Chapter Six:

### *Right Resources for Church Money*

*“11 Then there shall be a place which the LORD your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there; thither shall ye bring all that I command you; your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the heave offering of your hand, and all your choice vows which ye vow unto the LORD: 12 And ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God, ye, and your sons, and your daughters, and your menservants, and your maidservants, and the Levite that is within your gates; forasmuch as he hath no part nor inheritance with you.”*  
(Deuteronomy 12:11-12 KJV)

God provides the church with resources ordained by Him. Each congregation of the church has members and they are called by God to give to Him by bringing to the church that He has placed them in to receive spiritual food.

The church should teach their members, disciples and those whom the church is reaching out the importance and the purpose of giving to God and the rights of the church to collect from them. Apostle Paul taught his churches and explained well to them why they need to give to support the work of God: *“7 Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? 8 Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? 9 For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? 10 Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. 11 If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? 12 If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ. 13 Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things*

*live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? 14 Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.” (1 Corinthians 9:7-14 KJV) Paul explained clearly that those who teach and labor in doctrine have the right to be supported by those whom they are discipling and caring, “17 Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. 18 For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward.” (1 Timothy 6:17-18 KJV) Jesus spoke also the same to His apostles when He sent them to preach the gospel, “3 Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves. 4 Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes: and salute no man by the way. 5 And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house. 6 And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again. 7 And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the labourer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house.” (Luke 10:3-7 KJV)*

There are various ways we are expected to give to the church.

**I. Tithing:** The tenth of all the income we receive belongs to God. Abram was the first one to bring his tithes to the Lord.

*“18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. 19 And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: 20 And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all. 21 And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself.” (Genesis 14:18-20 KJV) When God blessed Abraham with a victory and he was able to recover the people of Lot along with the goods, he offered the tithe of his spoils. Bringing the tithes to God was Abraham’s acknowledgment of God bringing the plunder to him. Giving our tithes is an act of expressing our faithfulness and trust in God that He is in our lives and is the one to help us through our struggles.*

Before *Melchizedek king of Salem* met Abraham, the king of Sodom went out to meet him. ***“And the king of Sodom went out to meet him after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer, and of the kings that were with him, at the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's dale.” (Genesis 14:17 KJV)*** I teach the people about tithing their income, salary, and also any other bonuses or allowances they receive. Satan always comes to tempt God’s people to spend the money on other things before giving the tithes. Therefore, I instruct the people that once they receive their salary or their income, the first thing they should do is to take the tithes out and put it in an envelope, write their names and bring it to the church. Then they can spend on what they need. It is important that once we receive our earnings, we separate the tithes and bring it to His storehouse, the church.

***“1 For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; 2 To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; 3 Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually. 4 Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.” (Hebrews 7:1-4 KJV)***

Giving the tithes is not giving to man but to God. Abraham gave the tithes to Melchizedek, who was a type of Christ, and he was the priest of the Most High God, King of peace, and King of righteousness. ***“Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.” (Hebrews 7:3 KJV)*** ***“And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth.” (Hebrews 7:8 KJV)***

When Abraham gave his tithes to Melchizedek, Levi also paid his tithes, ***“9 And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham. 10 For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchizedek met him.” (Hebrews 7:9-10 KJV)*** Therefore when we give our tithes, our children who are still not yet born are giving their

tithes to God. Therefore we need to take the responsibility to teach and discipline our children, to be honest and to tithe their income correctly. ***“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” (Proverbs 22:6 KJV)***

The tithes need to be collected by the pastors and the faithful workers of the church, and they need to be recorded and accounted. ***“And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham.” (Hebrews 7:5 KJV)***

Why the pastors and the faithful workers of the church should collect the tithes? It is not only about honest people who need to collect and keep the money, but as well as to deal with the individual lives of the people. Before collecting the tithes, the church leaders should examine the individual lives of the people. We should not only collect the tithes, but we should examine the individual lives of the people, know their problems, the status of their finances, and other struggles that they are passing through. People who live in sin, yet give their tithes will not be blessed by God unless they repent. The rule is that we should direct the people by expounding to them the truth, and counsel them to repent and come back to God. This will be the way to show that we love our brethren by facilitating their spiritual growth.

Collection of the tithes comes after reaching out to the people and educating them in the Word of God and serving them and meeting their spiritual needs. If we fail to do that, we are not helping the people, we are not doing the work of God well, and we are unworthy to receive the peoples' tithes.

If some people in the congregation are not able to give their tithes, the church should make every effort to reach them, and search their lives, find out why they are not able to give and help them to get back on their feet. I usually recommend the tithe to be put in an envelope mentioning the tithe giver's name and the amount with the date of giving. There is a frequent question that I am asked by those who cannot understand why they need to write their names on the envelope, and they will use what Jesus said, ***“1 Take heed that ye do not your***

*alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. 2 Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. 3 But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: 4 That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.” (Matthew 6:1-4 KJV)* Jesus said that about giving alms and not about giving tithes. Putting the tithes in an envelope and writing their names on it is a good policy so that those who are not yet giving their tithes can be approached for spiritual counseling. The Levites who are called to the office of the priesthood are required to mention each person’s name and the amount that person gave, *“And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham.” (Hebrews 7:5 KJV)*

There are reasons for not giving the tithes and as the following:

- Unfaithfulness
- Ungratefulness
- Rebelliousness
- Bad stewardship
- Lack of faith and not trusting God
- Greed
- Worldliness and leisure activities
- Lack of knowledge
- Lack of trust in the church

Going through the Scriptures will open our understanding of these points and will teach us lessons.

When Jacob was on his journey to Haran to get a wife from there, in obedience to his father’s instructions, the Lord God of Abraham and Isaac appeared to him in a dream and confirmed God’s promise to his ancestors. *“10 And Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went toward Haran. 11 And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that*



*place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep. 12 And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. 13 And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; 14 And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. 15 And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of. 16 And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not. 17 And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven. 18 And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. 19 And he called the name of that place Bethel: but the name of that city was called Luz at the first. 20 And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, 21 So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God: 22 And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.” (Genesis 28:10-22 KJV)*

When Jacob had woken up from his dream, he committed his life to the Lord and made a vow to God. The lordship of God over Jacob's life was evident by what he did in that place. Jacob saw and heard the Lord speak to him. Jacob was alone in that place but he expressed his worship to God. He called the place “Bethel” meaning the house of God. Jacob promised to give a tithe of everything that God would give him as long as he would be provided for and kept safe. Parallel to what Jacob experienced and vowed, the Church of God in the New Testament is the Bethel where true worshippers must meet God, experience Him, and fulfill their promises to Him.

1. ***“Shall the LORD be my God:”*** These words express the Lordship of God over the worshipper’s life. The word “Lord” means master. Hence, God should be followed and honored in every arena of the worshipper’s life: education, marriage, family, work, and service. The Lord God should lead the worshipper through life, and be enthroned in his heart and everyday living.
2. ***“And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God’s house:”*** (*Genesis 28:22 KJV*) These words express the commitment of the worshipper to be part of God’s church. The church is the family of God and the members are of God’s household. A worshipper commits his life to God and to the church where he serves God and helps build up God’s people. ***“19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; 20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.”*** (*Ephesians 2:19-20 KJV*)
3. ***“And of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee:”*** (*Genesis 28:22 KJV*) All the provision that a worshipper receives has to be tithed because God is the source of everything. Jacob promised a tithe of everything to acknowledge that God alone can protect him, God alone can provide for him, and God alone can prosper him. Jacob committed himself to the principle of tithing when he had nothing, and God hearkened to his vow and commitment and blessed him. In my teaching, I always say to those who lack and are in need, and to those who are looking for job opportunities to commit themselves to give their tithe to God and so experience the abundant blessing of God. I have seen many people who have made a commitment to bring their tithes even in their jobless state being blessed with opportunities for a job, employment, and income. Our God is faithful to what He has promised in His Word.

Indeed God blessed Jacob’s journey. God gave him a suitable wife Leah, but he was not happy with God’s choice and took Rachel, the sister, as wife in addition to Leah. Jacob served his uncle Laban, who had cheated him ten times for twenty years. Later, Jacob returned

home as God had instructed him together with his big family. In his journey back home God protected him from the hands of his uncle Laban, and when he arrived at his place, God protected him from his brother Esau who wanted revenge on him. ***“18 And Jacob came to Shalem, a city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Padanaram; and pitched his tent before the city. 19 And he bought a parcel of a field, where he had spread his tent, at the hand of the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for an hundred pieces of money. 20 And he erected there an altar, and called it EleloheIsrael.”*** (Genesis 33:18-20 KJV) Jacob set up an altar in Shechem and neglected what he had promised God that if the Lord would bless him he would return to Bethel and set up an altar there. This wavering of commitment by Jacob brought troubles in the life of his family: ***“1 And Dinah the daughter of Leah, which she bare unto Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land. 2 And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her, and lay with her, and defiled her. 3 And his soul clave unto Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the damsel, and spake kindly unto the damsel. 4 And Shechem spake unto his father Hamor, saying, Get me this damsel to wife. 5 And Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter: now his sons were with his cattle in the field: and Jacob held his peace until they were come. 6 And Hamor the father of Shechem went out unto Jacob to commune with him. 7 And the sons of Jacob came out of the field when they heard it: and the men were grieved, and they were very wroth, because he had wrought folly in Israel in lying with Jacob's daughter: which thing ought not to be done. 8 And Hamor communed with them, saying, The soul of my son Shechem longeth for your daughter: I pray you give her him to wife. 9 And make ye marriages with us, and give your daughters unto us, and take our daughters unto you. 10 And ye shall dwell with us: and the land shall be before you; dwell and trade ye therein, and get you possessions therein. 11 And Shechem said unto her father and unto her brethren, Let me find grace in your eyes, and what ye shall say unto me I will give. 12 Ask me never so much dowry and gift, and I will give according as ye shall say unto me: but give me the damsel to wife. 13 And the sons of Jacob answered Shechem and Hamor his father deceitfully, and said, because he had defiled Dinah their sister: 14 And they said unto them, We cannot do this thing, to give***

*our sister to one that is uncircumcised; for that were a reproach unto us: 15 But in this will we consent unto you: If ye will be as we be, that every male of you be circumcised; 16 Then will we give our daughters unto you, and we will take your daughters to us, and we will dwell with you, and we will become one people. 17 But if ye will not hearken unto us, to be circumcised; then will we take our daughter, and we will be gone. 18 And their words pleased Hamor, and Shechem Hamor's son. 19 And the young man deferred not to do the thing, because he had delight in Jacob's daughter: and he was more honourable than all the house of his father. 20 And Hamor and Shechem his son came unto the gate of their city, and communed with the men of their city, saying, 21 These men are peaceable with us; therefore let them dwell in the land, and trade therein; for the land, behold, it is large enough for them; let us take their daughters to us for wives, and let us give them our daughters. 22 Only herein will the men consent unto us for to dwell with us, to be one people, if every male among us be circumcised, as they are circumcised. 23 Shall not their cattle and their substance and every beast of their's be our's? only let us consent unto them, and they will dwell with us. 24 And unto Hamor and unto Shechem his son hearkened all that went out of the gate of his city; and every male was circumcised, all that went out of the gate of his city. 25 And it came to pass on the third day, when they were sore, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brethren, took each man his sword, and came upon the city boldly, and slew all the males. 26 And they slew Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah out of Shechem's house, and went out. 27 The sons of Jacob came upon the slain, and spoiled the city, because they had defiled their sister. 28 They took their sheep, and their oxen, and their asses, and that which was in the city, and that which was in the field, 29 And all their wealth, and all their little ones, and their wives took they captive, and spoiled even all that was in the house. 30 And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, Ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites: and I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me, and slay me; and I shall be destroyed, I and my house. 31 And they said, Should he deal with our sister as with an harlot?" (Genesis 34:1-31 KJV)* Jacob's family faced the consequence when he wavered in his

commitment toward God. Dinah, his daughter went out with the women of the land. She was introduced to a man, who finally raped her, and her two brothers Simeon and Levi avenged against the whole city of Shechem because they had treated their sister as a harlot. ***“And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, Ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites: and I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me, and slay me; and I shall be destroyed, I and my house.”*** (Genesis 34:30 KJV) Typically, Jacob’s family was the church now, but in the midst of danger. And the reason was Jacob, who had neglected his vow to God and did not go back to Bethel, the house of God to worship and pay his tithes, but he built up an altar in Shechem. Someone might say that Jacob had made his vow to God twenty years ago and so must have forgotten and that the Lord should have reminded him. The Lord did remind him about Bethel when He appeared to him and commanded him to go back from Padan Aram to his father’s land. We can read that in the following Scripture:

***“1 And he heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, Jacob hath taken away all that was our father's; and of that which was our father's hath he gotten all this glory. 2 And Jacob beheld the countenance of Laban, and, behold, it was not toward him as before. 3 And the LORD said unto Jacob, Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred; and I will be with thee. 4 And Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field unto his flock, 5 And said unto them, I see your father's countenance, that it is not toward me as before; but the God of my father hath been with me. 6 And ye know that with all my power I have served your father. 7 And your father hath deceived me, and changed my wages ten times; but God suffered him not to hurt me. 8 If he said thus, The speckled shall be thy wages; then all the cattle bare speckled: and if he said thus, The ringstraked shall be thy hire; then bare all the cattle ringstraked. 9 Thus God hath taken away the cattle of your father, and given them to me. 10 And it came to pass at the time that the cattle conceived, that I lifted up mine eyes, and saw in a dream, and, behold, the rams which leaped upon the cattle were ringstraked, speckled, and grisled. 11 And the angel of God spake unto me in a dream, saying, Jacob: And I said, Here am I. 12 And he said, Lift up now thine eyes, and see, all the rams which leap upon the cattle are***

*ringstraked, speckled, and grised: for I have seen all that Laban doeth unto thee. 13 I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto me: now arise, get thee out from this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred.*” (Genesis 31:1-13 KJV)

Now we need to notice that in whichever church God has placed us in, we need to be faithful to God and bring our tithes to the church that we are part of and where we are serving the Lord. I have seen many individuals and families destroyed and their lives unfruitful because they had failed to bring their tithes to the house of God. The portion they had failed to bring was destroyed and taken away from them by troubles, sickness, accidents, theft, and so on.

Now Jacob, who was brokenhearted and fearful of the people in Shechem, needed to be restored. And God reminded Jacob again of his commitment and covenant with God: *“And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother.”* (Genesis 35:1 KJV) Then Jacob truly repented of what he had done and recognized how his family was harmed because of his neglect of God’s Word and his vow to God. *“2 Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments: 3 And let us arise, and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went. 4 And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in their hand, and all their earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem. 5 And they journeyed: and the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob. 6 So Jacob came to Luz, which is in the land of Canaan, that is, Bethel, he and all the people that were with him. 7 And he built there an altar, and called the place Elbethel: because there God appeared unto him, when he fled from the face of his brother.”* (Genesis 35:2-7 KJV)

Some say that the amount Jacob had spent in Shechem in buying the land and in erecting the altar there is equivalent to his tithes, *“19 And*

*he bought a parcel of a field, where he had spread his tent, at the hand of the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for an hundred pieces of money. 20 And he erected there an altar, and called it Elelohe-Israel.” (Genesis 33:19-20 KJV)* It is not about money and how much he spent, but about his obedience to God and how much he needed to keep his commitment to God and to His Word. God is not after our money, but after us to keep abiding by His instructions. The pattern of the life and ministry of Jacob in Shechem as we noticed here is out of God’s Word and the way that God wanted Jacob and his family to live.

We need to be honest with God and tithe all that we receive in the form of salary and privileges like house rent allowance, water and electricity allowance, internet allowance, transport allowance, food allowance, insurance allowance and so on. *“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 unto the LORD.” (Leviticus 27:30 KJV)* Therefore, we need to be honest with God and tithe all that we receive. Also, if we neglect or withhold our tithes for a time then when we bring it back to God we need to add a fifth of its value. *“And if a man will at all redeem ought of his tithes, he shall add thereto the fifth part thereof.” (Leviticus 27:31 KJV)*

When we tithe, it should be as an act of repentance and turning back to God, an expression of our faith and faithfulness, and by doing that, we will receive His reward.

*“6 For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed. 7 Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return? 8 Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. 9 Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. 10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. 11 And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he*

*shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts. 12 And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts.” (Malachi 3:6-12 KJV)*

God is the same and His Word never changes. In the Scripture verses above, He assured His people that He would never change, so the people would not be consumed. He had mercy on His people. God is still giving us chances to return to Him. He is calling us to repent, turn away from our sins and turn towards Him. Now since we know that God was calling His people to go back to Him and follow His decrees and commands, then the question is, ‘What had they done wrong?’ Adultery, fornication, idolatry, or witchcraft; sure they had done grievous things against God that He was asking them to return to Him. They had turned away from His decrees and had not kept them. But they may ask, **“Wherein shall we return?”** (Malachi 3:7 KJV) This question will be asked by people who worship God and even serve Him but God is telling them to return to Him.

What had they done wrong that God was not happy with them? The charge against them was that they were robbing Him in terms of tithes and offerings. Lack of tithing is robbing God and God will not bless thieves unless they repent and restore what they had stolen. Withholding our tithes and offerings from God’s church is considered a robbery. The tithes are the first ten percent of whatever we have received as income or other material blessings. After we bring our tithes to God, then we give our offerings according to what we have decided to give to the Lord. God’s children should not behave like thieves with God. Thieves or robbers will not enter the kingdom of God, or in other words, there is no salvation for them unless they repent.

When people or believers rob God in this way, they will be under a curse; themselves, their families, the church that does not teach or admonish about this matter, and the whole society will be under a curse because the people of God are robbing the Lord. **“Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.”** (Malachi 3:9 KJV) God had sent His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to save us and to deliver us from sin and death. People who believe in



Christ must repent of their sins and commit their life fully to do His will. But then how can they say they have offered their lives fully to Jesus when they are not yet bringing their tithes and offerings to God's storehouse on earth? How can they say that they love God with all their hearts when they haven't offered their money to Him?

Tithes and offerings are used to support God's work through His church. The tithes and the offerings will also support the workers especially those who do full-time ministry and don't hold a secular job. Through the church support, they can do God's work thoroughly. Every one of us should bring our tithes and offerings to the church that God had placed us in. Some attend the church, but give their tithes and offering to other churches or ministries for various reasons. Some do this because they feel a particular church is poor or in need and need financial support but these reasons or others are not acceptable. According to God's Word, the tithes and offerings should be given to the church from where we receive our spiritual food. Someone might ask how those churches that are in need and have less income coming in or are located in poor areas manage. God is over them as He is over us. They need to teach their members and discipline their workers to tithe their income correctly and to bring their offerings to God with a glad heart. Then, the Lord will bless them and provide them as they continue to obey Him and apply His Word in their lives. God's work needs financial support that comes from the tithes and offerings so that the spiritual food that is needed to supply and support the flocks is there. By giving our tithes and offerings, we receive greater blessings in the following ways:

1. ***The windows of heaven shall be opened: "10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."*** (*Malachi 3:10 KJV*) Those who practice tithing regularly and who live a holy life, face no financial problem and they receive blessings in such abundance that they have no room to hold. God sure will pour out so many blessings in our lives as we diligently practice tithing. The windows of heaven will be opened after we give our tithes. In fact, the incomes we have

will not be enough for us, but after we bring our tithes, the windows of heaven will be opened and pour out God's blessings on us which will satisfy us completely. Everything we receive needs to be tithed to the Lord by bringing it to the church that God has placed us in. Those who do not tithe their income or tithe regularly or incorrectly are robbing God. If we rob God, then how can we expect God to bless us and grant us wealth? The windows of heaven will be opened only when we bring our full tithes to the Lord. When we bring our whole tithes to the Lord, then we are renewing our covenant with God as well as proclaiming our trust that God will sustain us with the remaining income of ours. Who can give us wealth? Only God can give us that through the windows of heaven and that only when we bring our whole tithes to the Lord, to the treasury of God's church. It is not our salary, our smartness, or the business that will aid us in life, but it is the Lord who will bless us when we obey Him.

2. ***The devourer will be rebuked: "And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts."*** (Malachi 3:11 KJV) As we bring our tithes to God, He will be the one to rebuke the devourer and save us from pests like taxes, accidents, sickness, penalties, fines, unnecessary bills, and so on. Therefore, once we get our salary or whatever income, we need to take the tithes out, so God will open the ***windows of heaven*** to cover the bills and He will block the unnecessary expenses. Why do we need to bring the whole tithes? ***"And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts."*** (Malachi 3:11 KJV) Those who fail to bring their tithes are exposed to mishaps like fines, accidents, and sicknesses. Not only do people fall a prey to material loss and physical illnesses, but also become victims of spiritual hindrances like fear, doubt, anxiety, devilish attacks, and even exposure to death. This happens because God is not rebuking the devourer

and not preventing the devil's work in the life of those who cheat God by not bringing to God's church their whole tithes.

People who rob God in this manner lose their partnership with God will live in lack, and will never be in plenty. Many people complain and lament that they had worked so much, and labored hard, but at the end lost everything, and they wonder why things have gone wrong. What God has said is the following: ***“neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts.” (Malachi 3:11 KJV)*** The fruit of the vine is the grapes and as they grow, they become green, then gradually acquire sweetness and as they mature, change color. If the grapes fall to the ground before they are ripe, then it will be of no use and all the labor of the farmer will be in vain. And that will be the outcome of the hard work and labor of those who do not bring their tithes to the House of their Lord, His church, that they have been placed in. All that they had collected will disappear without a trace.

Therefore, because of this, I do not give ministry to those who fail to give their tithes because I know that God will not allow it to prosper for they had broken their partnership with God in robbing Him.

3. ***The vines in the fields shall not cast their fruit before the time: “And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts.” (Malachi 3:11 KJV)*** The vine is the fruit of our hard work and labor in the fields. Suppose we work hard to plant a vineyard, when the fruit appears, God will not allow it to fall when it is still green. God will see that your hard work over the years is not wasted but it will be established and stabilized on your behalf.
4. ***We will be called blessed: “And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts.” (Malachi 3:12 KJV)*** One way our faithfulness to God is revealed is when we bring our tithes and offerings, and He

will reward us in such a way that everyone will notice and say that we are blessed by the Lord.

Christ also spoke about tithing and He recommended not to leave it undone. ***“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.” (Matthew 23:23 KJV)***

I usually keep track of people in our congregations who tithe and those who don't and those who are irregular. I follow them up and find out the reason for not tithing at all or not tithing regularly. In fact, I am concerned for them for the following reasons:

- They might have no job or income and I feel the need to help them to overcome this problem.
- They might be in financial trouble, having to pay debts and loans. In that case, they need special help and intervention from the church and counseling to get them back on their feet financially.
- They might not be aware that the windows of heaven are shut down on them. In that case, I need to teach them that financially they can be restored even as they commit to bring their tithes.
- They might not be aware that they will be afflicted by the devourer if they will not bring their tithes in full. So I need to teach them and educate them about that.

Let us commit ourselves to God, to obey Him and bring our tithes and our offerings in full. Let us trust Him and His promises to us and be assured that He will fulfill what His Word says. Let us walk in the light of His Word so that we may have the life to the full and receive great blessings from God without the devourer knocking at our finances.

***II. Offerings and Gifts:*** There are various types of offerings and gifts for the church to avail of to continue the Mission Work. After we bring our tithes in full, then we can give our offerings to God. If we will not bring our tithes, then we are not yet giving. The more we give, the

more we will receive. As we give and continue to give generously with love in our hearts, then we will also reap generously. ***“6 But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. 7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work: 9 (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever.” (2 Corinthians 9:6-9 KJV)*** Offerings are also collected in response to the call of God to construction of new buildings for His name and glory, as in the case of the elders of the Israelites who offered generously towards the building of the temple of God. ***“6 Then the chief of the fathers and princes of the tribes of Israel and the captains of thousands and of hundreds, with the rulers of the king's work, offered willingly, 7 And gave for the service of the house of God of gold five thousand talents and ten thousand drams, and of silver ten thousand talents, and of brass eighteen thousand talents, and one hundred thousand talents of iron. 8 And they with whom precious stones were found gave them to the treasure of the house of the LORD, by the hand of Jehiel the Gershonite. 9 Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly, because with perfect heart they offered willingly to the LORD: and David the king also rejoiced with great joy.” (1 Chronicles 29:6-9 KJV)***

There are more kinds of offerings we can find in the Scripture verses below:

- A. ***Burnt Offering: “And the LORD called unto Moses, and spake unto him out of the tabernacle of the congregation, saying, 2 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, If any man of you bring an offering unto the LORD, ye shall bring your offering of the cattle, even of the herd, and of the flock. 3 If his offering be a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish: he shall offer it of his own voluntary will at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the LORD.” (Leviticus 1:1-3 KJV)*** When the people of God brought the burnt offering to the Lord, they burnt it whole to

God. So here we can value the amount of money that we can give to God as a burnt offering, in order to let the fire on the altar of God's ministry glow continuously. Leviticus 1 speaks about and describes other animals that can be brought to God as a burnt offering. Everyone in the congregation can bring as he is led by the Holy Spirit an amount of money according to his ability as a burnt offering. ***"10 And if his offering be of the flocks, namely, of the sheep, or of the goats, for a burnt sacrifice; he shall bring it a male without blemish."*** ***"14 And if the burnt sacrifice for his offering to the LORD be of fowls, then he shall bring his offering of turtledoves, or of young pigeons."*** (Leviticus 1:10, 14 KJV) King Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings: ***"3 And Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of David his father: only he sacrificed and burnt incense in high places.4 And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there; for that was the great high place: a thousand burnt offerings did Solomon offer upon that altar."*** (1 Kings 3:3-4 KJV)

**B. Meat offering:** ***"1 And when any will offer a meat offering unto the LORD, his offering shall be of fine flour; and he shall pour oil upon it, and put frankincense thereon: 2 And he shall bring it to Aaron's sons the priests: and he shall take thereout his handful of the flour thereof, and of the oil thereof, with all the frankincense thereof; and the priest shall burn the memorial of it upon the altar, to be an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD: 3 And the remnant of the meat offering shall be Aaron's and his sons': it is a thing most holy of the offerings of the LORD made by fire."*** (Leviticus 2:1-3 KJV) Meat offerings were offered to furnish the physical needs of the ministers of God. Paul commended that in his teaching. ***"14 Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction. 15 Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the Gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. 16 For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. 17 Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. 18 But I have***

*all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God.” (Philippians 4:14-18 KJV)* Paul also emphasized to them that as they are faithful in meeting his needs, God will supply all their needs. *“But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:19 KJV)* Those who cannot afford to give big amount of money as an offering can bring small amount that express their devotion to God and that will help and support the needs of the church. In return to that, God, will help and support their needs. *“1 And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. 2 And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. 3 And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: 4 For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had.” (Luke 21:1-4 KJV)* Jesus’ ministry was helped and supported by the substance of women. *“1 And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him, 2 And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, 3 Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, 3 And Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance.” (Luke 8:1-3 KJV)*

- C. *Peace Offering: “1 And if his oblation be a sacrifice of peace offering, if he offer it of the herd; whether it be a male or female, he shall offer it without blemish before the LORD. 2 And he shall lay his hand upon the head of his offering, and kill it at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: and Aaron's sons the priests shall sprinkle the blood upon the altar round about. 3 And he shall offer of the sacrifice of the peace offering an offering made by fire unto the LORD; the fat that covereth the inwards, and all the fat that is upon the inwards, 4 And the two kidneys, and the fat that is on them, which is by the flanks, and the caul above the liver, with the*

*kidneys, it shall he take away. 5 And Aaron's sons shall burn it on the altar upon the burnt sacrifice, which is upon the wood that is on the fire: it is an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD.” (Leviticus 3:1-5 KJV)* After we repent of certain sins, we can express our devotion to God by bringing a peace offering to Him. There is no offering that can atone for our sins except the blood of Jesus and our offering will not bring us peace unless we repent. After we repent, we can bring a peace offering to express our gratitude to God who forgives our sins and grants us peace. *“14 For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; 15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; 16 And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: 17 And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.” (Ephesians 2:14-17 KJV)*

*D. Sin offering: “1 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 2 Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a soul shall sin through ignorance against any of the commandments of the LORD concerning things which ought not to be done, and shall do against any of them: 3 If the priest that is anointed do sin according to the sin of the people; then let him bring for his sin, which he hath sinned, a young bullock without blemish unto the LORD for a sin offering. 4 And he shall bring the bullock unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the LORD; and shall lay his hand upon the bullock's head, and kill the bullock before the LORD.” “13 And if the whole congregation of Israel sin through ignorance, and the thing be hid from the eyes of the assembly, and they have done somewhat against any of the commandments of the LORD concerning things which should not be done, and are guilty; 14 When the sin, which they have sinned against it, is known, then the congregation shall offer a young bullock for the sin, and bring him before the tabernacle of the congregation.” “22 When a ruler hath sinned, and done somewhat through ignorance against any of*



*the commandments of the LORD his God concerning things which should not be done, and is guilty; 23 Or if his sin, wherein he hath sinned, come to his knowledge; he shall bring his offering, a kid of the goats, a male without blemish.” “27 And if any one of the common people sin through ignorance, while he doeth somewhat against any of the commandments of the LORD concerning things which ought not to be done, and be guilty; 28 Or if his sin, which he hath sinned, come to his knowledge: then he shall bring his offering, a kid of the goats, a female without blemish, for his sin which he hath sinned.” (Leviticus 4:1-4, 13-14, 22-23, 27-28 KJV)* Again here, the sin offering is not to make atonement for sin, but it can be considered as an expression of a person’s repentance and his awareness that his sin had caused damage and losses to God and to His people and church. The sin offering is to express his willingness to compensate and to repair and restore the damage he had caused. The sin offering is not to be given to cover up a sin or to be used to wave away the disgrace of willful sin. When King David repented for the sin of counting the men after God’s discipline, he was instructed by God through the prophet Gad to build an altar for the Lord, and he paid for the threshing floor where he built the altar for God. *“18 And Gad came that day to David, and said unto him, Go up, rear an altar unto the LORD in the threshingfloor of Araunah the Jebusite. 19 And David, according to the saying of Gad, went up as the LORD commanded. 20 And Araunah looked, and saw the king and his servants coming on toward him: and Araunah went out, and bowed himself before the king on his face upon the ground. 21 And Araunah said, Wherefore is my lord the king come to his servant? And David said, To buy the threshingfloor of thee, to build an altar unto the LORD, that the plague may be stayed from the people. 22 And Araunah said unto David, Let my lord the king take and offer up what seemeth good unto him: behold, here be oxen for burnt sacrifice, and threshing instruments and other instruments of the oxen for wood. 23 All these things did Araunah, as a king, give unto the king. And Araunah said unto the king, The LORD thy God accept thee. 24 And the king said unto*

*Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing. So David bought the threshingfloor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver. 25 And David built there an altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. So the LORD was intreated for the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel.”(2 Samuel 24:18-25 KJV)*

*E. Temple offering: “11 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 12 When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their number, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul unto the LORD, when thou numberest them; that there be no plague among them, when thou numberest them. 13 This they shall give, every one that passeth among them that are numbered, half a shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary: (a shekel is twenty gerahs:) an half shekel shall be the offering of the LORD. 14 Every one that passeth among them that are numbered, from twenty years old and above, shall give an offering unto the LORD. 15 The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel, when they give an offering unto the LORD, to make an atonement for your souls. 16 And thou shalt take the atonement money of the children of Israel, and shalt appoint it for the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; that it may be a memorial unto the children of Israel before the LORD, to make an atonement for your souls.” (Exodus 30:11-16 KJV)* The collection was for all from the age of 20 years and above. It was called atonement money and it was used *for the service of the tabernacle of the congregation*. And it became a memorial for the Israelites to do every year. At the time of Jesus that was still there and Jesus was requested to pay it. *“24 And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute? 25 He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers? 26 Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him,*

*Then are the children free. 27 Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee.” (Matthew 17:24-27 KJV)* Every one of us is responsible to cater to the needs and service of the house of God, His church, so that the house of God will not be neglected and every need is met.

At the time of Nehemiah, after rebuilding the wall and setting the gates, the people came together and committed themselves to attend to the temple’s material needs, to ensure that the services go on in the proper way. *“32 Also we made ordinances for us, to charge ourselves yearly with the third part of a shekel for the service of the house of our God; 33 For the shewbread, and for the continual meat offering, and for the continual burnt offering, of the sabbaths, of the new moons, for the set feasts, and for the holy things, and for the sin offerings to make an atonement for Israel, and for all the work of the house of our God. 34 And we cast the lots among the priests, the Levites, and the people, for the wood offering, to bring it into the house of our God, after the houses of our fathers, at times appointed year by year, to burn upon the altar of the LORD our God, as it is written in the law: 35 And to bring the firstfruits of our ground, and the firstfruits of all fruit of all trees, year by year, unto the house of the LORD: 36 Also the firstborn of our sons, and of our cattle, as it is written in the law, and the firstlings of our herds and of our flocks, to bring to the house of our God, unto the priests that minister in the house of our God: 37 And that we should bring the firstfruits of our dough, and our offerings, and the fruit of all manner of trees, of wine and of oil, unto the priests, to the chambers of the house of our God; and the tithes of our ground unto the Levites, that the same Levites might have the tithes in all the cities of our tillage. 38 And the priest the son of Aaron shall be with the Levites, when the Levites take tithes: and the Levites shall bring up the tithe of the tithes unto the house of our God, to the chambers, into the treasure house. 39 For the children of Israel and the children of Levi shall bring the offering of the corn, of the new wine, and the oil, unto the chambers, where are the vessels of the sanctuary, and the priests that*

*minister, and the porters, and the singers: and we will not forsake the house of our God.” (Nehemiah 10:32-39 KJV)*

In our church we give our offering in the way mentioned below: If it is a small amount then we just drop it in the collection basket. If it is a considerable amount, then we take an envelope and write our name, the amount, and the kind of offering we are giving.

***III. Giving The Firstfruits: “9 Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: 10 So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.” (Proverbs 3:9-10 KJV)***

The Bible speaks about the firstborn and the firstfruits that belong to the Lord our God. While we commit to put God first and as our priority, reading, and understanding the Word of God will inspire us more to do what God requires of us. We honor the Lord with our bodies and lifestyle because we are His temple. We are also required to honor the Lord with every substance or belonging we have and with the firstfruits of all our increase. The firstfruits are the things that belong to God and we need to return them to the Lord. As we obey this command, the Lord will add more to us and bless us abundantly beyond measure. He promised, ***“So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out.” (Proverbs 3:10 KJV)*** We put God first by giving Him our first fruit.

#### **A. Honour God with the Firstfruits:**

**1. Honoring God with the firstfruits is an act of faithfulness expressed by giving:** We ought to remember and honor God by bringing back to Him the first fruits that we have received from Him. It is the requirement of the Lord from us. ***“1 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 2 Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine.” (Exodus 13:1-2 KJV)*** ***“12 That thou shalt set apart unto the LORD all that openeth the matrix, and every firstling that cometh of a beast which thou hast; the males shall be the LORD's. 13 And every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt***

*break his neck: and all the firstborn of man among thy children shalt thou redeem.” (Exodus 13:12-13 KJV)*

**2. Honoring God with the firstfruits is commemorating God’s mighty work of salvation and deliverance:** God required the dedication of the firstborns and the firstfruits upon the deliverance of His chosen people from bondage and slavery. *“36 He smote also all the firstborn in their land, the chief of all their strength. 37 He brought them forth also with silver and gold: and there was not one feeble person among their tribes.” (Psalm 105:36-37 KJV)* *“50 He made a way to his anger; he spared not their soul from death, but gave their life over to the pestilence; 51 And smote all the firstborn in Egypt; the chief of their strength in the tabernacles of Ham: 52 But made his own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock.” (Psalms 78:50-52 KJV)* The Lord struck the firstborn of the Egyptians, human and animal, but He took out His people victoriously the day that He brought His people out of Egypt, *“14 And it shall be when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What is this? that thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand the LORD brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage:15 And it came to pass, when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that the LORD slew all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man, and the firstborn of beast: therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all that openeth the matrix, being males; but all the firstborn of my children I redeem.16 And it shall be for a token upon thine hand, and for frontlets between thine eyes: for by strength of hand the LORD brought us forth out of Egypt.” (Exodus 13:14-16 KJV)* The Lord God has saved us, and as the Lord keeps doing great miracles and wonders in our lives, keeping us healthy, supplying all our needs, and blessing us in every area of our lives, we return to Him the first harvest of all our crops or our first month’s whole salary and income every year as a token of our thanksgiving and acknowledgment of His goodness and wonderful work for having saved us from the bondage of sin and death. Without God’s saving grace and without God sustaining us and providing for our daily needs, we are nothing and we can do nothing. Thus giving God the firstfruit is to give our first salary, the first increase, the first income of every business, or the first month’s income every year as

submission to God's command. We also need to explain the reason for giving our first fruits to God to our children and our disciples for we who were once enslaved by sin and were in deep bondage and a slave to our wants and needs, have now been set free by the Lord through the blood of Jesus, the Firstborn from the grave. We all need to grasp the meaning and do what God requires of us to ultimately be blessed. *"Thou shalt not delay to offer the first of thy ripe fruits, and of thy liquors: the firstborn of thy sons shalt thou give unto me."* (Exodus 22:29 KJV)

**3. God had apportioned the firstfruits for the priests:** *"8 And the LORD spake unto Aaron, Behold, I also have given thee the charge of mine heave offerings of all the hallowed things of the children of Israel; unto thee have I given them by reason of the anointing, and to thy sons, by an ordinance for ever. 13 And whatsoever is first ripe in the land, which they shall bring unto the LORD, shall be thine; every one that is clean in thine house shall eat of it.14 Every thing devoted in Israel shall be thine.15 Every thing that openeth the matrix in all flesh, which they bring unto the LORD, whether it be of men or beasts, shall be thine: nevertheless the firstborn of man shalt thou surely redeem, and the firstling of unclean beasts shalt thou redeem. 16 And those that are to be redeemed from a month old shalt thou redeem, according to thine estimation, for the money of five shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, which is twenty gerahs."* (Numbers 18:8,13-16 KJV) The Lord God had given the firstfruits to Aaron the priest for his living. The practical application of this command for us today is that the firstfruits will be used to support the pastor of the church. *"And the LORD spake unto Aaron, Thou shalt have no inheritance in their land, neither shalt thou have any part among them: I am thy part and thine inheritance among the children of Israel"* (Numbers 18:20 KJV) The priests were not given inheritance but they were supported by the firstfruits as God ordained. There were twelve tribes in Israel including Ephraim and Manasseh and thus each tribe shouldered the responsibility each month of the year to support the priests with their first fruits.

**4. God gave the distinction of firstfruits and tithes:** *"21And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel*

*for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation. 22 Neither must the children of Israel henceforth come nigh the tabernacle of the congregation, lest they bear sin, and die. 23 But the Levites shall do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they shall bear their iniquity: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations, that among the children of Israel they have no inheritance.24 But the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer as an heave offering unto the LORD, I have given to the Levites to inherit: therefore I have said unto them, Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance.” (Numbers 18:21-24 KJV) From the aforementioned Scripture it is clear that the tithes and the firstfruits are different entities. God allocated the tithes for the Levites and the firstfruits for the priest. The practical application of this instruction of God in the church today is to use the tithes to support the workers of the church and the firstfruits to support the pastor and his godly family.*

Similarly, in the book of Nehemiah, it has been clearly expounded that the tithes and the firstfruit are different entities. “35 *And to bring the firstfruits of our ground, and the firstfruits of all fruit of all trees, year by year, unto the house of the LORD:36 Also the firstborn of our sons, and of our cattle, as it is written in the law, and the firstlings of our herds and of our flocks, to bring to the house of our God, unto the priests that minister in the house of our God: 37 And that we should bring the firstfruits of our dough, and our offerings, and the fruit of all manner of trees, of wine and of oil, unto the priests, to the chambers of the house of our God; and the tithes of our ground unto the Levites, that the same Levites might have the tithes in all the cities of our tillage.*” (Nehemiah 10:35-37 KJV) Again the tithes were to be given to the Levites and not to the priests because the priests received the firstfruits.

**B. The Firstborn belong to God:** “11 *And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 12 And I, behold, I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of all the firstborn that openeth the matrix among the children of Israel: therefore the Levites shall be mine; 13 Because all the firstborn are mine; for on the day that I*

**smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I hallowed unto me all the firstborn in Israel, both man and beast: mine shall they be: I am the Lord.**” (Numbers 3:11-13 KJV) The firstborn man and the firstling cattle and sheep truly belong to God and we cannot put aside this statute of God:

**“14 And the Lord spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, saying, 15 Number the children of Levi after the house of their fathers, by their families: every male from a month old and upward shalt thou number them. 16 And Moses numbered them according to the word of the Lord, as he was commanded.”** (Numbers 3:14-16) So Moses numbered them as he was commanded.

**“39 All that were numbered of the Levites, which Moses and Aaron numbered at the commandment of the LORD, throughout their families, all the males from a month old and upward, were twenty and two thousand. 40 And the LORD said unto Moses, Number all the firstborn of the males of the children of Israel from a month old and upward, and take the number of their names. 41 And thou shalt take the Levites for me (I am the LORD) instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel; and the cattle of the Levites instead of all the firstlings among the cattle of the children of Israel.”** (Numbers 3:39-41) God’s purpose was to take the Levites as a replacement for the firstborn of all the Israelites.

**“42 And Moses numbered, as the LORD commanded him, all the firstborn among the children of Israel. 43 And all the firstborn males by the number of names, from a month old and upward, of those that were numbered of them, were twenty and two thousand two hundred and threescore and thirteen. 44 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 45 Take the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel, and the cattle of the Levites instead of their cattle; and the Levites shall be mine: I am the LORD. 46 And for those that are to be redeemed of the two hundred and threescore and thirteen of the firstborn of the children of Israel, which are more than the Levites; 47 Thou shalt even take five shekels apiece by the poll, after the shekel of the sanctuary shalt thou take them: (the shekel is twenty gerahs:) 48 And thou shalt give the money, wherewith the odd number of them is to be redeemed, unto Aaron and to his sons.**



*49 And Moses took the redemption money of them that were over and above them that were redeemed by the Levites: 50 Of the firstborn of the children of Israel took he the money; a thousand three hundred and threescore and five shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary: 51 And Moses gave the money of them that were redeemed unto Aaron and to his sons, according to the word of the LORD, as the LORD commanded Moses.” (Numbers 3:42-51)* God was so particular about His claim of the firstborn and the firstlings. The small number of first-born which exceeded the number of the Levites (273 in all) were to be redeemed, at five shekels apiece, and the redemption-money given to Aaron. This was how all the firstborn of Israel and the firstlings of their cattle were given to God, and God gave them as gifts to the priests who ministered before HIM.

*“14 Thus shalt thou separate the Levites from among the children of Israel: and the Levites shall be mine. 15 And after that shall the Levites go in to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation: and thou shalt cleanse them, and offer them for an offering. 16 For they are wholly given unto me from among the children of Israel; instead of such as open every womb, even instead of the firstborn of all the children of Israel, have I taken them unto me. 17 For all the firstborn of the children of Israel are mine, both man and beast: on the day that I smote every firstborn in the land of Egypt I sanctified them for myself. 18 And I have taken the Levites for all the firstborn of the children of Israel. 19 And I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and to his sons from among the children of Israel, to do the service of the children of Israel in the tabernacle of the congregation, and to make an atonement for the children of Israel: that there be no plague among the children of Israel, when the children of Israel come nigh unto the sanctuary. 20 And Moses, and Aaron, and all the congregation of the children of Israel, did to the Levites according unto all that the LORD commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so did the children of Israel unto them. 21 And the Levites were purified, and they washed their clothes; and Aaron offered them as an offering before the LORD; and Aaron made an atonement for them to cleanse them. 22 And after that went the Levites in to do their service in the tabernacle of the congregation before Aaron, and before his sons: as the LORD had commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so did they unto them.”*

*(Numbers 8:14-22)* The Levites who were taken as replacements of all the firstborn of Israel underwent the process of cleansing and sanctification as commanded by the Lord before they were given to Aaron to assist in the service at the tabernacle of God. This was to assure the safety and prosperity of the whole nation – ***that there be no plague among the children of Israel***, which means that the last plague of Egypt, the death of the first-born, would not happen to the community. Moreover, the priests who were supported by the first-fruits were to teach the Israelites obedience unto God, so that God’s wrath due to rebelliousness would not come upon them as had happened to Pharaoh and the Egyptians. Today we can apply in our congregations this same formula so that God’s ministry will continue. The body of priests and Levites are to minister before God and for the welfare of the whole church. They are to keep themselves holy and sanctified for God who separated the whole tribe of the Levites and sanctified them to be His own. They were not given any possession of the land but God instituted the financial support for them by the regulation of giving the tithes to the Levites and the firstfruits to the priests. The Levites were also commanded to give their tithes, a tenth of the tithe to Aaron the priest. ***“25 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 26 Thus speak unto the Levites, and say unto them, When ye take of the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then ye shall offer up an heave offering of it for the Lord, even a tenth part of the tithe. 27 And this your heave offering shall be reckoned unto you, as though it were the corn of the threshing floor, and as the fullness of the winepress. 28 Thus ye also shall offer an heave offering unto the Lord of all your tithes, which ye receive of the children of Israel; and ye shall give thereof the Lord's heave offering to Aaron the priest.”*** *(Numbers 18:25-28)*

### **C. Giving God the Tithes, Firstfruits, and Offerings:**

The congregation of God in the wilderness were led by Priests and the Levites to draw near to God. In the same manner in the church today, when Christ ascended on high, He gave gifts. ***“8Wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. 11And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying***

*of the body of Christ:” (Ephesians 4:8,11-12)* Wherefore what God instituted in the Old Testament with regard to the financial support for those who are taking care of His tabernacle, is relevant in the church today and the giving of the first-fruits, tithes, and offerings for continuous service to God in His Tabernacle is a requirement of God which cannot be overlooked.

**1. How to give the first-fruits:** Majority of Christians do not practice the giving of the first-fruits though they want to obey this requirement of the Lord because they do not know how to manage it. If we consider to put God first in the area of our finances, surely the Lord will give us the wisdom to *give our first-fruit in a timely manner*. We have learned from the Scriptures that the practice is to give the firstfruit of every harvest which is corresponding to our first income of every year, first increase, and first profit of every business. The month that we give our firstfruit, we also need to give our tithe for that month. If we are not able to give our firstfruits because we do not have enough means to support ourselves or our families, in such cases, we need to give our whole tithes every month. Thereafter, we practically prepare ourselves to give the firstfruit by learning to budget and to save, willing to suffer by abstaining from unnecessary expenditure and worldly pleasures so that we can save and finally be able to afford to give the firstfruit to the Lord on time. We can also discipline ourselves to set aside an amount equal to our one month’s income so that we can give our first-fruit to God within a year. Even the Lord had commanded the Israelites that after they settled in the land the Lord had given them, that they needed to set apart the firstlings of their cattle and the first of all the fruit of the earth.

a) *“11 And it shall be when the LORD shall bring thee into the land of the Canaanites, as he sware unto thee and to thy fathers, and shall give it thee, 12 That thou shalt set apart unto the LORD all that openeth the matrix, and every firstling that cometh of a beast which thou hast; the males shall be the LORD’s. 13 And every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break his neck: and all the firstborn of man among thy children shalt thou redeem. 14 And it shall be when thy son*

*asketh thee in time to come, saying, What is this? that thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand the Lord brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage.” (Exodus 13:11-14 KJV)*

b) *“1 And it shall be, when thou art come in unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, and possessest it, and dwellest therein; 2 That thou shalt take of the first of all the fruit of the earth, which thou shalt bring of thy land that the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt put it in a basket, and shalt go unto the place which the LORD thy God shall choose to place his name there. 3 And thou shalt go unto the priest that shall be in those days, and say unto him, I profess this day unto the LORD thy God, that I am come unto the country which the LORD sware unto our fathers for to give us. 4 And the priest shall take the basket out of thine hand, and set it down before the altar of the LORD thy God. 5 And thou shalt speak and say before the LORD thy God, A Syrian ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous: 6 And the Egyptians evil entreated us, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage: 7 And when we cried unto the LORD God of our fathers, the LORD heard our voice, and looked on our affliction, and our labour, and our oppression: 8 And the LORD brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs, and with wonders: 9 And he hath brought us into this place, and hath given us this land, even a land that floweth with milk and honey. 10 And now, behold, I have brought the firstfruits of the land, which thou, O LORD, hast given me. And thou shalt set it before the LORD thy God, and worship before the LORD thy God: 11 And thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which the LORD thy God hath given unto thee, and unto thine house, thou, and the Levite, and the stranger that is among you.” (Deuteronomy 26:1-11 KJV)*

c) *“23 And when ye shall come into the land, and shall have planted all manner of trees for food, then ye shall count the*

*fruit thereof as uncircumcised: three years shall it be as uncircumcised unto you: it shall not be eaten of. 24 But in the fourth year all the fruit thereof shall be holy to praise the LORD withal. 25 And in the fifth year shall ye eat of the fruit thereof, that it may yield unto you the increase thereof: I am the LORD your God.” (Leviticus 19:23-25 KJV)* It was therefore the practice of the Jews to pluck off the fruit from their young trees, because their early fruit would hinder the growth of the tree, as well as the fruit because in the first three years they were not considered fully ripe. But the full-grown fruit in the fourth year was holy to the Lord and considered firstfruits to be given to the priests, and after that, it was all their own. This law in the case of fruit-trees seemed to run parallel to that in the case of animals, that no creature was to be accepted as an offering till it had completed eight days from birth. *“When a bullock, or a sheep, or a goat, is brought forth, then it shall be seven days under the dam; and from the eighth day and thenceforth it shall be accepted for an offering made by fire unto the LORD.” (Leviticus 22:27 KJV)*

I usually teach the disciples who have overcome financial constraints and have enough saving, to keep aside a certain amount of money every month so that over a period of twelve months, it will add up to a month's salary, which can be offered as firstfruit without a struggle. We need to be cautious about that because if we are careful to do that then when the time will come to pay our firstfruit then we will not be squeezed and we will find ourselves able to do it.

**2. Achan coveted some of the firstfruits:** *“And the Lord said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour. (Joshua 6:2 KJV)* The city of Jericho was the first city given to Joshua, a kind of firstfruit that the Lord commanded him to be destroyed by fire as an offering to Him. *“17And the city shall be accursed, even it, and all that are therein, to the LORD: only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent.18 And ye, in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp*

*of Israel a curse, and trouble it. 19 But all the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are consecrated unto the Lord: they shall come into the treasury of the Lord. 24*

*And they burnt the city with fire, and all that was therein: only the silver, and the gold, and the vessels of brass and of iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD.” (Joshua 6:17-19, 24 KJV)*

Jericho was most likely the firstfruit that God desired from His people to give back to Him and so this was confirmed by Joshua.

*“And Joshua adjured them at that time, saying, Cursed be the man before the LORD, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho: he shall lay the foundation thereof in his firstborn, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it.” (Joshua 6:26)*

Joshua announced that the one who will rebuild the city of Jericho will do at the expense of his firstborn and the rest of what he has,

and it really happened during the time of King Ahab. *“In his days did Hiel the Bethelite build Jericho: he laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his firstborn, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Joshua the son of Nun.” (1Kings 16:34 KJV)*

*“But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the Lord was kindled against the children of Israel.”*

*(Joshua 7:1 KJV)* The first fruit that God gave to Joshua in conquering the Land, the city of Jericho was devoted to the Lord by fire, and all the silver and gold, and vessels of brass and iron were to be taken into the treasury of the Lord. But Achan coveted from therein, stole precious things, and kept under his tent.

*“10 And the Lord said unto Joshua, Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face? 11 Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff. 12 Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed: neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you. 13 Up, sanctify the people, and say, Sanctify yourselves against tomorrow: for thus saith the Lord God of Israel, There is an accursed thing in*

*the midst of thee, O Israel: thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you. 14 In the morning therefore ye shall be brought according to your tribes: and it shall be, that the tribe which the Lord taketh shall come according to the families thereof; and the family which the Lord shall take shall come by households; and the household which the Lord shall take shall come man by man. 15 And it shall be, that he that is taken with the accursed thing shall be burnt with fire, he and all that he hath: because he hath transgressed the covenant of the Lord, and because he hath wrought folly in Israel. 19 And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me. 20 And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done: 21 When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it. 22 So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran unto the tent; and, behold, it was hid in his tent, and the silver under it. 23 And they took them out of the midst of the tent, and brought them unto Joshua, and unto all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the Lord. 24 And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had: and they brought them unto the valley of Achor. 25 And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the Lord shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones.” (Joshua 7:10-15, 19-25 KJV)* Achan brought trouble to the whole community and calamity to his own household by stealing from the first city which God said had to be given back to Him. Achan transgressed the covenant with God and was accursed. It is so dreadful to take first things which are of God’s.

**D. Giving the More Excellent Sacrifice, the First-fruit:**

1. ***“3 And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. 4 And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering:” (Genesis 4:3-4)*** Abel was the first man mentioned in the Bible who offered His first-fruit to the Lord. He was a shepherd and he brought the firstlings of his flock. ***“By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.” (Hebrews 11:4 KJV)***
  
2. ***“5 In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the LORD'S passover. 6 And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the LORD: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread. 7In the first day ye shall have an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein. 8But ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD seven days: in the seventh day is an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein. “9And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 10Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest: 11 And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it.” (Leviticus 23:5-11KJV)*** Our Lord Jesus Christ was the Passover who died on the day that the Passover lamb was slaughtered. ***“In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the LORD'S passover.” (Leviticus 23:5 KJV)*** The day after Christ's death was the Sabbath. ***“6 And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the LORD: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread. 7In the first day ye shall have an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein.” (Leviticus 23:6-7 KJV)*** The Sheaf of the Firstfruits that was offered on the Feast of Unleavened Bread after the Sabbath typified the Lord Jesus. The day after the Sabbath was the first day of the week when the Lord was resurrected from the dead. To this day we celebrate the first day of the



week, Sunday, as the Lord's Day. ***“10 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest:11 And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it.” (Leviticus 23:10-11 KJV)***

3. ***“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.” (Romans 8:29 KJV) “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.” (I Corinthians 15:20)*** Our Lord Jesus Christ is the real Firstborn and the true Firstfruit. The Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were events that foreshadowed the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ who gave His life and His blood for the redemption of our sins. He was the Firstborn of God the Father and the Firstborn among us, the children of God. Our Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead on the very day that the first-fruits were offered to show that He was the substance of the shadow. ***“10 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest:11 And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it.” (Leviticus 23:10-11 KJV)***
4. ***“9 Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: 10 So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.” (Proverbs 3:9-10 KJV)*** We are taught by this law to honor the Lord with our substance, and with the first-fruits of all our increase. ***“And ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, until the selfsame day that ye have brought an offering unto your God: it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.” (Leviticus 23:14 KJV)*** The Israelites were not allowed to eat of

their new corn till God's portion was offered to Him. The Israelites were the chosen people of God in the Old Testament who were guided by the Lord's instruction in every aspect of their lifestyle. If we claim to be the chosen people of God, we must begin with God and always live our lives with God – begin every day with Him, begin every meal with Him, begin every affair and business with Him. We should choose to honor God with our lives, with our substance, and with every firstfruit of our labor and increase.

5. *“22 But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, 23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, 24 And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.” (Hebrews 12:22-24 KJV)* We are the Church of the Firstborn, the brothers of Jesus and our names are written in Heaven. We ought to follow our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church. Our first-fruits and life testimony should also be like that of Abel that even when we are dead it is still spoken about. We should give not only our tithes and first fruits but our whole life to God. Abel not only gave his firstfruit to God but also his life. He was willing to suffer and die and withstand persecution in obedience to God. We ought to dedicate our whole life to live for God and also be willing to suffer for the glory of His Name. If Abel obeyed and gave his life as first fruit to God, how much more we need to obey Him today? The Israelites were redeemed by the blood of the lamb and henceforth observed giving their firstfruits to God. Then how much more should we who are redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus! How much more should we observe giving our firstfruits, our whole life and all that God requires of us!
6. *“And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of*

***our body.” (Romans 8:23 KJV)*** We have the firstfruits of the spirit, even the Holy Spirit that the Lord promised to give us. We give our firstfruits to God with the full understanding and by the enabling of the Holy Spirit, with rejoicing, in faith, and living the moment awaiting the future redemption of our bodies to gain a glorified body when we meet with the Lord in the clouds. As we practice giving our firstfruit, our barns will be filled with plenty, and our press shall burst out with new wine.

I give my first fruit in this way: I divide whatever income I have into twelve portions and give one portion to the Lord; I put it in an envelope, write my name on it and specify the giving as firstfruits and I drop it in the collection basket.

***IV. Vows: “4 When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. 5 Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay. 6 Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands?” (Ecclesiastes 5:4-6 KJV)*** Men make vows to God when they pass through the valley experience facing humiliation. The hardness of the trials will impart humility to them and make them go in line with the standard of God and His Word and they make a commitment to comply with God’s will and His purpose in their life. Once we commit ourselves to God, then we are accountable before God to fulfill what we have committed ourselves to do. When we neglect or delay in fulfilling our commitment or vow to God, then we are inviting destruction into our lives. There are certain people who do not show progress or show fruitfulness in their life because they are cold and lukewarm toward God. They just use God to get certain privileges. They make vows to God, but they don’t fulfill them. Therefore, God will not bless or prosper the work of their hands. The Bible says, ***“It is a snare to the man who devoureth that which is holy, and after vows to make enquiry.” (Proverbs 20:25 KJV)***

Committing our lives to God is our personal vow to Him and we fulfill this vow in the presence of His people who fear Him, that is His church. We can read that in the following Scriptures, ***“17 I will offer***

*to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD. 18 I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people, 19 In the courts of the LORD'S house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise ye the LORD.” (Psalm 116:17-19 KJV) “My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him.” (Psalm 22:25 KJV)*

Our vows are directed to Christ, so we need to fulfill them in the midst of His church for Christ is the head of the Church. The church must be aware of the people’s vows. *“And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.” (Colossians 1:18 KJV)*

When Moses gave his instructions to the Israelites about the place of worship when they entered the Promised Land, he stressed on a certain place of worship where they needed to bring their tithes, offerings, firstfruits, sacrifices and vows to the Lord. *“1 These are the statutes and judgments, which ye shall observe to do in the land, which the LORD God of thy fathers giveth thee to possess it, all the days that ye live upon the earth. 2 Ye shall utterly destroy all the places, wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree: 3 And ye shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars, and burn their groves with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place. 4 Ye shall not do so unto the LORD your God. 5 But unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come: 6 And thither ye shall bring your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and heave offerings of your hand, and your vows, and your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and of your flocks: 7 And there ye shall eat before the LORD your God, and ye shall rejoice in all that ye put your hand unto, ye and your households, wherein the LORD thy God hath blessed thee. 8 Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes. 9 For ye are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance, which the LORD your God giveth you. 10 But when ye go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the*

LORD your God giveth you to inherit, and when he giveth you rest from all your enemies round about, so that ye dwell in safety; 11 Then there shall be a place which the LORD your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there; thither shall ye bring all that I command you; your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the heave offering of your hand, and all your choice vows which ye vow unto the LORD: 12 And ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God, ye, and your sons, and your daughters, and your menservants, and your maidservants, and the Levite that is within your gates; forasmuch as he hath no part nor inheritance with you. 13 Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest: 14 But in the place which the LORD shall choose in one of thy tribes, there thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, and there thou shalt do all that I command thee. 15 Notwithstanding thou mayest kill and eat flesh in all thy gates, whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which he hath given thee: the unclean and the clean may eat thereof, as of the roebuck, and as of the hart. 16 Only ye shall not eat the blood; ye shall pour it upon the earth as water. 17 Thou mayest not eat within thy gates the tithe of thy corn, or of thy wine, or of thy oil, or the firstlings of thy herds or of thy flock, nor any of thy vows which thou vowest, nor thy freewill offerings, or heave offering of thine hand: 18 But thou must eat them before the LORD thy God in the place which the LORD thy God shall choose, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite that is within thy gates: and thou shalt rejoice before the LORD thy God in all that thou puttest thine hands unto. 19 Take heed to thyself that thou forsake not the Levite as long as thou livest upon the earth. 20 When the LORD thy God shall enlarge thy border, as he hath promised thee, and thou shalt say, I will eat flesh, because thy soul longeth to eat flesh; thou mayest eat flesh, whatsoever thy soul lusteth after. 21 If the place which the LORD thy God hath chosen to put his name there be too far from thee, then thou shalt kill of thy herd and of thy flock, which the LORD hath given thee, as I have commanded thee, and thou shalt eat in thy gates whatsoever thy soul lusteth after. 22 Even as the roebuck and the hart is eaten, so thou shalt eat them: the unclean and the clean shall eat of them alike. 23 Only be sure that thou eat not the blood: for the blood is the life; and thou mayest not eat the

*life with the flesh. 24 Thou shalt not eat it; thou shalt pour it upon the earth as water. 25 Thou shalt not eat it; that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, when thou shalt do that which is right in the sight of the LORD. 26 Only thy holy things which thou hast, and thy vows, thou shalt take, and go unto the place which the LORD shall choose: 27 And thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, the flesh and the blood, upon the altar of the LORD thy God: and the blood of thy sacrifices shall be poured out upon the altar of the LORD thy God, and thou shalt eat the flesh. 28 Observe and hear all these words which I command thee, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee for ever, when thou doest that which is good and right in the sight of the LORD thy God. 29 When the LORD thy God shall cut off the nations from before thee, whither thou goest to possess them, and thou succeedest them, and dwellest in their land; 30 Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou enquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise. 31 Thou shalt not do so unto the LORD thy God: for every abomination to the LORD, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods. 32 What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.” (Deuteronomy 12:1-32 KJV)*

The purpose of bringing all the tithes, offerings, the firstfruits, sacrifices, and the vows to one place where the priests were located was to inspect these items, their quality, and purpose, and to observe what was going on in the life of people coming to God. No one then was allowed to do his own will and wish, but everyone was admonished to observe and follow the instructions of God’s Word in the matter of giving. In the New Testament, the church is the place for people to bring all these; the tithes, first fruits, offerings, sacrifices and vows to God, to be received and examined by the church leaders and to be kept under the charge of the church government. The church authority is responsible to admonish the people and collect from them what they ought to give to God and check what is going on and examine their personal life. The church is responsible to teach the members budgeting and saving and setting apart things that they need to give to God. The church should examine what the people have

vowed to God. Vows according to the Bible should go in line with the Word of God. There are certain vows that are wrong and contradict the Word of God and the will of God. In that case, the church has the authority to amend or nullify what the member had promised to do. That is good to protect the people from falling into sin and traps set by the devil.

The purpose of the government of the church is to check people's promises and vows, therefore it should be extending into the life of each and every home and family that are part of the church. The church must exercise its authority and monitor the lives of individuals and families that belong to her and also be aware of people's promises and vows. Moses gave authority to the head of the families, fathers and husbands, to be responsible to monitor the spiritual commitment of their wives and daughters as you can read in *Numbers 30:1-13*, "***1 And Moses spake unto the heads of the tribes concerning the children of Israel, saying, This is the thing which the LORD hath commanded. 2 If a man vow a vow unto the LORD, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth. 3 If a woman also vow a vow unto the LORD, and bind herself by a bond, being in her father's house in her youth; 4 And her father hear her vow, and her bond wherewith she hath bound her soul, and her father shall hold his peace at her: then all her vows shall stand, and every bond wherewith she hath bound her soul shall stand. 5 But if her father disallow her in the day that he heareth; not any of her vows, or of her bonds wherewith she hath bound her soul, shall stand: and the LORD shall forgive her, because her father disallowed her. 6 And if she had at all an husband, when she vowed, or uttered ought out of her lips, wherewith she bound her soul; 7 And her husband heard it, and held his peace at her in the day that he heard it: then her vows shall stand, and her bonds wherewith she bound her soul shall stand. 8 But if her husband disallowed her on the day that he heard it; then he shall make her vow which she vowed, and that which she uttered with her lips, wherewith she bound her soul, of none effect: and the LORD shall forgive her. 9 But every vow of a widow, and of her that is divorced, wherewith they have bound their souls, shall stand against her. 10 And if she vowed in her husband's house, or bound her soul by a bond with an oath; 11 And her husband heard it, and***

***held his peace at her, and disallowed her not: then all her vows shall stand, and every bond wherewith she bound her soul shall stand. 12 But if her husband hath utterly made them void on the day he heard them; then whatsoever proceeded out of her lips concerning her vows, or concerning the bond of her soul, shall not stand: her husband hath made them void; and the LORD shall forgive her. 13 Every vow, and every binding oath to afflict the soul, her husband may establish it, or her husband may make it void.” (Numbers 30:1-13 KJV)***

The fathers and husbands are supposed to be loyal to God and to the church and are given authority to govern their homes and families in the fear of the Lord. They are the one who are supposed to be the quality control officers over their family members and lead them to do what is right and just. Now when a wife or daughter, or any other member of the family, goes in the wrong direction and commits herself/himself to do something that contradicts God’s Word, they have the authority to nullify that vow. Now in the New Testament, the fathers and the husbands are the heads of the families and are given the power to lead the family as long as they are in line with God’s Word. Now when fathers and husbands are improper and live out of God’s Word and Will, then wives and children who are obedient to God’s Word are not to go along what their disobedient fathers or husbands say or instruct; as much as possible, they ought to resist and oppose disobedient fathers and husbands. Fathers and husbands are given authority from God and from the church to lead their homes and families with God’s Word and help the church leaders by maintaining the Godly atmosphere in their homes. But when they are disobedient and rebellious, then the authority will be given to other members in the family-wife, or children, who are obedient to God’s Word.

***“21 When thou shalt vow a vow unto the LORD thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the LORD thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee 22 But if thou shalt forbear to vow, it shall be no sin in thee.” (Deuteronomy 23:21-22 KJV)***

We make a vow at the time we are in trouble, and we need to fulfill it when God answers our prayers and delivers us out of our trouble. ***“13 I will go into thy house with burnt offerings: I will pay thee my vows,***



***14 Which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble.” (Psalm 66:13-14 KJV) Even when God puts the non-believers in a hard situation, they make their vows and do their best to fulfill it. How much more then the people of God need to be obedient and diligent to fulfill their vows unto God? “And the LORD shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the LORD in that day, and shall do sacrifice and oblation; yea, they shall vow a vow unto the LORD, and perform it.” (Isaiah 19:21 KJV) “Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows.” (Jonah 1:16 KJV)***

Therefore, let us be diligent and be glad to fulfill our vows to God. ***“Thy vows are upon me, O God: I will render praises unto thee.” (Psalm 56:12 KJV) We should not be like Jonah whom God disciplined and put in the belly of the big fish to force him to fulfill his vows. “But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD.” (Jonah 2:9 KJV) When we fulfill our vows, we will impress the non-believers around us; our good example of fulfilling our vows unto God and keeping our commitment will help them to hear the good news and the salvation of Jesus in a proper way. Therefore, “Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows: for the wicked shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off.” (Nahum 1:15 KJV) If we preach the Gospel to the lost, we need to live the message and the Word of God, so salvation can flow through us to others, and our lives will be a good example for them to follow Christ.***

We need to fulfill our vows in the presence of the people of God, that is His church. ***“14 I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people. 18 I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people,” (Psalm 116:14,18 KJV) “Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion: and unto thee shall the vow be performed.” (Psalm 65:1 KJV) Zion was the place of His sanctuary and His people around Him, and today as the church we need to fulfill our commitment to God in the presence of His people. In those days, the people of God fulfilled their vows in the sanctuary of God, in the place that he had ordained the ark to be located. It was to that place the***

people were recommended to bring their vows. Such an arrangement was to prove the faithfulness of God's people towards God, and there were the priests in their offices to spur the people on to be diligent in fulfilling their vows. People fulfilling their vows in God's sanctuary, in His church, and among His people will encourage others to live in obedience to Christ. Those who fear God will be noticed and approved by God and by His church and they will be a good example for others to follow. ***“16 Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. 17 And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. 18 Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.”*** (Malachi 3:16-18 KJV) Those who fear God and fulfill their vows will be blessed and honored by God. They will have power and authority over their enemies, and they will have wealth and riches. God will be their deliverer because He is pleased with them and this will be a great testimony in front of others. ***“2 But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. 3 And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the LORD of hosts.”*** (Malachi 4:2-3 KJV)

Bringing the offerings and fulfilling the vows in His sanctuary, God's church will give the opportunity for the priests, the church leaders to examine and approve what the people have vowed and offered to God, and to rebuke and correct those who cheat in the fulfillment of their vows. ***“But cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I am a great King, saith the LORD of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen.”*** (Malachi 1:14 KJV)

A very good example in the Bible of a person who fulfills his vows in the midst of God's people is the example of Hanna, the mother of Samuel who vowed to give her first son to the Lord. ***“7 And as he did so year by year, when she went up to the house of the LORD, so she***

*provoked her; therefore she wept, and did not eat. 8 Then said Elkanah her husband to her, Hannah, why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? am not I better to thee than ten sons? 9 So Hannah rose up after they had eaten in Shiloh, and after they had drunk. Now Eli the priest sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of the LORD. 10 And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the LORD, and wept sore. 11 And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head. 12 And it came to pass, as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli marked her mouth. 13 Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she had been drunken. 14 And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee. 15 And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD. 16 Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto. 17 Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him. 18 And she said, Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad.” (1 Samuel 1:7-18) “19 And they rose up in the morning early, and worshipped before the LORD, and returned, and came to their house to Ramah: and Elkanah knew Hannah his wife; and the LORD remembered her. 20 Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about after Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of the LORD. 21 And the man Elkanah, and all his house, went up to offer unto the LORD the yearly sacrifice, and his vow. 22 But Hannah went not up; for she said unto her husband, I will not go up until the child be weaned, and then I will bring him, that he may appear before the LORD, and there abide for ever. 23 And Elkanah her husband said unto her, Do what seemeth thee good; tarry until thou have weaned him; only the LORD establish his word. So the woman abode, and gave her son suck until she weaned him. 24 And when she had weaned him, she*

*took him up with her, with three bullocks, and one ephah of flour, and a bottle of wine, and brought him unto the house of the LORD in Shiloh: and the child was young. 25 And they slew a bullock, and brought the child to Eli. 26 And she said, Oh my lord, as thy soul liveth, my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the LORD. 27 For this child I prayed; and the LORD hath given me my petition which I asked of him: 28 Therefore also I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the LORD. And he worshipped the LORD there.” (1 Samuel 1:19-28 KJV)* Hannah prayed to God and made a vow to give back to God what He would give her. God was merciful to her and she fulfilled what she had promised to God by dedicating her first son, Samuel, to the Lord for His service. The priest at the place of worship commended Hannah for her good attitude towards God and wished her more of God’s blessings in her life. *“19 Moreover his mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. 20 And Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife, and said, The LORD give thee seed of this woman for the loan which is lent to the LORD. And they went unto their own home. 21 And the LORD visited Hannah, so that she conceived, and bare three sons and two daughters. And the child Samuel grew before the LORD.” (1 Samuel 2:19-21 KJV)* Therefore, as we are faithful in fulfilling our vows unto the Lord, God’s blessings will flow more into our lives and He will increase our wealth and riches.

Another example is the mother of Lemuel, who had requested God for a son. *“1 The words of king Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him. 2 What, my son? and what, the son of my womb? and what, the son of my vows?” (Proverbs 31:1-2 KJV)* And when God gave her a son, she taught him godliness and righteousness and the following truths contained in God’s Word:

*A. Don’t go after women or drink wine: “3 Give not thy strength unto women, nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings. 4 It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink: 5 Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted. 6 Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts. 7 Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no*

*more.” (Proverbs 31:3-7 KJV) Our children are the future managers for our treasures. Therefore we need to teach them to avoid temptation and the things that take away their sound minds, wealth, and treasures.*

*B. Help the oppressed and speak out on their behalf: “8 Open thy mouth for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction. 9 Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy.” (Proverbs 31:8-9 KJV) Our children are the future managers for the society and the church, and we need to equip them with God’s Word and train them to exercise justice and equity so that God would bless them and establish them with their ministries.*

*C. The characters and the value of marrying a virtuous woman: “10 Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. 11 The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. 12 She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. 13 She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. 14 She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar. 15 She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens. 16 She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard. 17 She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms. 18 She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night. 19 She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. 20 She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy. 21 She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet. 22 She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple. 23 Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land. 24 She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant. 25 Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come. 26 She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. 27 She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. 28 Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. 29 Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. 30 Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a*

***woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised. 31 Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates.” (Proverbs 31:10-31 KJV)*** We need to inculcate in the lives of our children the value of Godly families and prepare them to have godly marriages and be leaders of godly families and offspring.

Children are the gift from above, the marvelous treasure that God blesses us with. Therefore, when God gives us children, we need to commit ourselves to Him to raise them and train them in the fear of the Lord.

***“Vow, and pay unto the LORD your God: let all that be round about him bring presents unto him that ought to be feared.” (Psalm 76:11)*** It is time for us to examine ourselves and be diligent and faithful to God in fulfilling all that we have vowed to Him.

When I spoke to the Lord once about His people offering Him plenty of all these kinds of offerings, the Lord answered me and said, *‘I have given them more.’* And I understood that we cannot beat God in giving. The more we give to Him, the more we receive from Him.

***“4 When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. 5 Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay. 6 Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands?” (Ecclesiastes 5:4-6 KJV)*** Let us fear God and commit ourselves today to fulfill what we have vowed, and to live in a way in order to be a good example to the church and to the people around us so that they will be encouraged to go forward and fulfill their vows unto God and be blessed. Let us be motivated by the truth that as we obey and fulfill what we have promised, God will establish the work of our hands and will prosper us and add to us.

# Chapter Seven:

## *Wrong Resources for Church Money*

*“21 I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. 22 Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. 23 Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. 24 But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.” (Amos 5:21-24 KJV)*

*“13 Hear ye, and testify in the house of Jacob, saith the Lord GOD, the God of hosts, 14 That in the day that I shall visit the transgressions of Israel upon him I will also visit the altars of Bethel: and the horns of the altar shall be cut off, and fall to the ground. 15 And I will smite the winter house with the summer house; and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall have an end, saith the LORD.” (Amos 3:13-15 KJV)*

The following are the wrong financial resources for the church:

*I. Tithes, offerings and firstfruits from people who live in sin:* We start this chapter with the Word of God from the book of Amos where we can read that God would visit the sin of the Israelites and punish them for it, and not only that, He would punish and deal with them and cut the altar at Bethel. *“That in the day that I shall visit the transgressions of Israel upon him I will also visit the altars of Bethel: and the horns of the altar shall be cut off, and fall to the ground.” (Amos 3:14 KJV)* We know that the altar at Bethel was built by Jeroboam after his rebelliousness to divert the people of God away from the temple worship at Jerusalem. *“26 And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David: 27 If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah. 28 Whereupon the king took counsel,*

*and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. 29 And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan. 30 And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan. 31 And he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi. 32 And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah, and he offered upon the altar. So did he in Bethel, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made. 33 So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Bethel the fifteenth day of the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart; and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel: and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense.” (I Kings 12:26-33 KJV)* So what we can conclude here is that the altar of Bethel was an altar of corruption, an idol, raised up by man’s will and with the wrong motive. Even those who were ministering were not genuine ministers and that added more to the corruption of that altar. There was no law of God and no discipline as God had ordained in the temple worship at Jerusalem. The people’s lives were of no concern to those who were leading them at the altar of Bethel. The priests were corrupted and their concern was that the people would continue to bring their tithes and their offerings, even if it were from sinful resources. *“4 Come to Bethel, and transgress; at Gilgal multiply transgression; and bring your sacrifices every morning, and your tithes after three years: 5 And offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven, and proclaim and publish the free offerings: for this liketh you, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord GOD.” (Amos 4:4-5 KJV)* But God was not happy with the people and He declared to them, *“6 And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD. 7 And also I have withholden the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest: and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered. 8 So two or three cities wandered unto one city, to drink water; but they were not satisfied: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD. 9 I have*



*smitten you with blasting and mildew: when your gardens and your vineyards and your fig trees and your olive trees increased, the palmerworm devoured them: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD. 10 I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt: your young men have I slain with the sword, and have taken away your horses; and I have made the stink of your camps to come up unto your nostrils: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD. 11 I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD. 12 Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel. 13 For, lo, he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, The LORD, The God of hosts, is his name.” (Amos 4:6-13 KJV)* Though they had brought their sacrifices, yet they were in want for bread, the rain was withheld from their fields and their harvest was damaged and some of their cities were left without rain. Blasts and mildew were sent to them and pestilence affected them as in the manner of Egypt. He slew their sons in battles, some of their cities were overthrown, but they still didn't repent or return to the Lord.

God said to them: *“4 Come to Bethel, and transgress; at Gilgal multiply transgression; and bring your sacrifices every morning, and your tithes after three years: 5 And offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven, and proclaim and publish the free offerings: for this liketh you, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord GOD.” (Amos 4:4-5 KJV)* When God said *Come to Bethel, and transgress; at Gilgal multiply transgression*, it implies that there was a sin that needed to be dealt with. When the people came to worship, they brought their tithes and their offerings, but their life was in shambles, being riddled with sin.

Now, one of the wrong resources for the church to obtain money from is through tithes and offerings from church members who live in sin and without correction from the church. If we read the first three verses of Amos 4, we can discover the sin:

***“1 Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan, that are in the mountain of Samaria, which oppress the poor, which crush the needy, which say to their masters, Bring, and let us drink.” (Amos 4:1 KJV)*** ‘The kine of Bashan’ were the arrogant, upper-class women of the ruling class. They were so worldly and lavish and indulged themselves in food, clothes, and entertainment. They must have been fleecing their husbands of their money in order to splurge in luxury. When the men couldn’t cope with their growing demands, they must have probably preyed on the poor and extorted money from them and abused them. So their sin was worldliness, debauchery, injustice, and abuse. To make matters worse, the priests condoned the sin by keeping silent as long as they received tithes and offerings and sacrifices of various kinds. Nowadays, many churches literally close their eyes to the sin of abuse, injustice, greed, worldliness, immorality, and other sins. They appear to be happy as long as the ministry is going on and the flow of money from the people is constant and they have resources to spend but sin is rampant. Such churches teem with people who come and go with no change in life. Church leaders are not willing to correct their members because they are afraid that members or families would leave the church. God has ordained His wrath to descend upon these churches and their members. ***“2 The Lord GOD hath sworn by his holiness, that, lo, the days shall come upon you, that he will take you away with hooks, and your posterity with fishhooks. 3 And ye shall go out at the breaches, every cow at that which is before her; and ye shall cast them into the palace, saith the LORD.” (Amos 4:2-3 KJV)*** Such kind of church leaders who are aware of the wrongdoings of the people under them and yet choose not to correct them for fear of losing their favor and offending them will face the wrath of God. The Word of God says the following about such leaders, ***“They eat up the sin of my people, and they set their heart on their iniquity.” (Hosea 4:8 KJV)*** Church leaders should correct and admonish the people; they should deal properly with the sin. They should instruct the people and turn them away from sinning against the Lord because they are the ones who are assigned by God to give instructions to the people. If they do that, they can prevent the wrath of God from falling on His people. But if the church leaders condone the people’s sin and compromise with them, then God’s wrath and anger will be sent in full. Curses and destruction will be sent to such church leaders and

corruption will affect their seed and their descendants after them and also their disciples. The prophet Malachi wrote about that:

***“1 And now, O ye priests, this commandment is for you. 2 If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the LORD of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings: yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart. 3 Behold, I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts; and one shall take you away with it. 4 And ye shall know that I have sent this commandment unto you, that my covenant might be with Levi, saith the LORD of hosts. 5 My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name. 6 The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity. 7 For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts. 8 But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the LORD of hosts. 9 Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law.” (Malachi 2:1-9 KJV)***

We as church leaders should work with God to educate the people and impart to them the fear of God. God needs to be honored by His people. They must live a life free from the clutches of sin. For God to accept the people's tithes and offering and other sacrifices, the people need to be clean from their sins, and we as church leaders shouldn't hesitate to reprimand them for their sins and pursue them till they repent and turn to God. Otherwise, the tithes and the offerings that we receive from the people will bear the curse of God.

Injustice is one of the grievous sins that God abhors. The strong oppress the weak and abuse them. We ministers of God are called to practice justice and righteousness. The affluent church members may donate freely and lavishly to the church but we need to know the source of their income. We also need to check if they are abusing and taking advantage of the people who are under their care.

We don't depend on people's tithes and offerings for our living but we trust God who will provide all our needs. Therefore, we serve Him and serve the people according to the will of God, leading them in the way that God wants them to live. We should not be under obligation to anyone, especially the rich who contribute to the church lest we find it very difficult to handle and discipline them when we discover sin in their lives, especially injustice, because we are afraid that we may lose their financial support. Let's not forget God is the one who is the backbone of our lives and the Sustainer of our church and our ministry.

There are members of our congregation that I admonish for their wrongdoing and whom I urge to set their ways right. If they choose to leave, I don't get intimidated by the fact that their tithes and offerings will not be available to the church. I would rather avoid facing the wrath of God and I'm convinced that God will bless the church more and meet her needs and will add more finances when I correct people with His Word. We ought, to be honest before God and deal with people, including the rich, in the manner that God wants us to deal with them.

I refuse to accept tithes from people who don't come to church and attend Bible studies. What use is their money if their life is not changed? I explain to them that the church collects tithes after fulfilling her duty to provide the spiritual food, the Word of God, to the church members.

In the case of those who are not able to attend the church or Bible study because of work schedule or load, we visit them and meet their spiritual needs so that they are not victimized by the enemy and led astray.

In the book of Micah, God spoke clearly to the Israelites that giving their burnt offerings and other sacrifices, their firstfruit and their firstborn to God cannot be a payment for their sins. ***“6 Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? 7 Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my***

**transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?**” (Micah 6:6-7 KJV) We need to understand that we really need to disciple the people and help them to understand that we are interested to see their life change for the better and their act of giving will not exempt them from following God. **“He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”** (Micah 6:8 KJV) We need to tell the people that if their lives are not changed, then we are not interested in their finances. People’s lives are to be valued more than their finances.

There are ministers who are not blunt with people in dealing with their sins because they don’t want to lose their favor. Balaam was one of those who prophesied for wages: **“O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal; that ye may know the righteousness of the LORD.”** (Micah 6:5 KJV) Here is the account of his story and what he did against the Israelites because he could not stand to lose his reward from those who hired him.

***“1 And the children of Israel set forward, and pitched in the plains of Moab on this side Jordan by Jericho. 2 And Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites. 3 And Moab was sore afraid of the people, because they were many: and Moab was distressed because of the children of Israel. 4 And Moab said unto the elders of Midian, Now shall this company lick up all that are round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field. And Balak the son of Zippor was king of the Moabites at that time. 5 He sent messengers therefore unto Balaam the son of Beor to Pethor, which is by the river of the land of the children of his people, to call him, saying, Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt: behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me: 6 Come now therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people; for they are too mighty for me: peradventure I shall prevail, that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land: for I wot that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed. 7 And the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the rewards of divination in their hand; and they came unto Balaam, and spake unto him the words of Balak. 8 And he said unto them,***

*Lodge here this night, and I will bring you word again, as the LORD shall speak unto me: and the princes of Moab abode with Balaam. 9 And God came unto Balaam, and said, What men are these with thee? 10 And Balaam said unto God, Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, hath sent unto me, saying, 11 Behold, there is a people come out of Egypt, which covereth the face of the earth: come now, curse me them; peradventure I shall be able to overcome them, and drive them out. 12 And God said unto Balaam, Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed. 13 And Balaam rose up in the morning, and said unto the princes of Balak, Get you into your land: for the LORD refuseth to give me leave to go with you. 14 And the princes of Moab rose up, and they went unto Balak, and said, Balaam refuseth to come with us. 15 And Balak sent yet again princes, more, and more honourable than they. 16 And they came to Balaam, and said to him, Thus saith Balak the son of Zippor, Let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming unto me: 17 For I will promote thee unto very great honour, and I will do whatsoever thou sayest unto me: come therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people. 18 And Balaam answered and said unto the servants of Balak, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the LORD my God, to do less or more. 19 Now therefore, I pray you, tarry ye also here this night, that I may know what the LORD will say unto me more. 20 And God came unto Balaam at night, and said unto him, If the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them; but yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do. 21 And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab.”*

*(Numbers 22:1-21 KJV)* When God told Balaam not to go, he found it a struggle because he was drawn to the reward promised by Balak. He knew that God’s will for him was not to go, but he insisted on God sanctioning it, not because he delighted in serving God, but because his delight was in the reward. He even said that he would say what God wanted him to say when he went with the men. But the most profound underlying message is that Balaam should have downright refused Balak’s request because it was not God’s will for him to go. Moreover, by his act of disobedience, Balak would have known that God was against him. There are ministers who run from church to church to preach in order to receive gifts and love offerings and use them as their source of income. They maintain friendships and

relationships, making compromises so that they will be in good favor and invited all over again and receive remuneration all in the name of doing God's work. ***"Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core."*** (Jude 1:11 KJV)

Samuel was so assertive with Saul when the latter totally rejected Samuel's reasoning regarding keeping and offering sacrifices that came from wrong resources for the ministry. This was the command of God to Saul through Samuel. ***"Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass."*** (1 Samuel 15:3 KJV) But Saul did not obey God fully, ***"7 And Saul smote the Amalekites from Havilah until thou comest to Shur, that is over against Egypt. 8 And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. 9 But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but every thing that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly."*** (1 Samuel 15:7-9 KJV) What Saul did grieved God's heart. ***"10 Then came the word of the LORD unto Samuel, saying, 11 It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the LORD all night."*** (1 Samuel 15:10-11 KJV) Samuel was greatly upset with Saul for having grieved the Lord. Therefore let us read what Samuel did:

***"12 And when Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning, it was told Samuel, saying, Saul came to Carmel, and, behold, he set him up a place, and is gone about, and passed on, and gone down to Gilgal. 13 And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the LORD: I have performed the commandment of the LORD. 14 And Samuel said, What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear? 15 And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed. 16 Then Samuel said unto Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what***

*the LORD hath said to me this night. And he said unto him, Say on. 17 And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the LORD anointed thee king over Israel? 18 And the LORD sent thee on a journey, and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed. 19 Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the LORD, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the LORD? 20 And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and have gone the way which the LORD sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. 21 But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal. 22 And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. 23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king.” (1 Samuel 15:12-23 KJV)* Samuel rebuked Saul face to face and gave him the Word that He hated to hear. That was the right medicine for him and for his whole army who compromised. Samuel rejected the burnt offerings and the sacrifices of Saul and the army with him. Nowadays, there are many like Saul and we should not be enticed by what they give or offer of tithes, offerings, firstfruits or whatever gifts or sacrifices to the church. We should not be like Balaam. Curses and sickness will follow us if we do that. God’s provision will be cut when we compromise and our lives will be under threat. Therefore, church, let us pay heed to the message and repent.

Samuel did not stop till he put Agag to death. *“24 And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice. 25 Now therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD. 26 And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with thee: for thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD hath rejected thee from being king over Israel. 27 And as Samuel turned about to go away, he laid hold upon*



*the skirt of his mantle, and it rent. 28 And Samuel said unto him, The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou. 29 And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man, that he should repent. 30 Then he said, I have sinned: yet honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD thy God. 31 So Samuel turned again after Saul; and Saul worshipped the LORD. 32 Then said Samuel, Bring ye hither to me Agag the king of the Amalekites. And Agag came unto him delicately. And Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is past. 33 And Samuel said, As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the LORD in Gilgal. 34 Then Samuel went to Ramah; and Saul went up to his house to Gibeah of Saul. 35 And Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death: nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul: and the LORD repented that he had made Saul king over Israel.” (1 Samuel 15:24-35 KJV)*

Samuel did not go to Saul until the day of his death. We should not be fearful of disciplining those who compromise and are not willing to repent just because we might be in need of their resources. In fact, they are resourceless spiritually and whatever they give will be at equality with witchcraft and idolatry before God. ***“The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination: how much more, when he bringeth it with a wicked mind?” (Proverbs 21:27 KJV)*** Therefore, we should avoid receiving from them.

Some would ask then what they should do with the offering of people who have just come to Christ and are not fully committed to God. I am not speaking about the new people or those whom we are reaching out in evangelism, but about those who are being disciplined and are going through the process of purging and pruning. If they will not hear the truth from us, then from whom will they hear? If we don't correct them then what ministry and service are we doing? What use is their offering if they are not changed? What right are we to avail of God's blessings?

***“17 There shall be no whore of the daughters of Israel, nor a sodomite of the sons of Israel. 18 Thou shalt not bring the hire of a***

*whore, or the price of a dog, into the house of the LORD thy God for any vow: for even both these are abomination unto the LORD thy God.” (Deuteronomy 23:17-18 KJV)* God’s Word forbids any income that is gained from evil things to be used for God’s work. Quality control is required in the case of the following:

1. From whom the money is taken.
2. From where the source of money is.

The purpose of God in stating all these rules is to direct us to scrutinize those under our care so that we will disciple them and help them to go in the way that God wants them to move. Therefore, we need to be more careful in how we conduct ourselves with regard to the collection of money. God wants us to work with Him to clean the vessels and to clean the resources. His blessings will flow to us when He sees us interested in keeping to the pattern that He has designed as mentioned in the Scriptures.

The following incident from the book of Judges speaks to us clearly about what is going on in the church today:

*“1 And there was a man of mount Ephraim, whose name was Micah. 2 And he said unto his mother, The eleven hundred shekels of silver that were taken from thee, about which thou cursedst, and spakest of also in mine ears, behold, the silver is with me; I took it. And his mother said, Blessed be thou of the LORD, my son. 3 And when he had restored the eleven hundred shekels of silver to his mother, his mother said, I had wholly dedicated the silver unto the LORD from my hand for my son, to make a graven image and a molten image: now therefore I will restore it unto thee. 4 Yet he restored the money unto his mother; and his mother took two hundred shekels of silver, and gave them to the founder, who made thereof a graven image and a molten image: and they were in the house of Micah. 5 And the man Micah had an house of gods, and made an ephod, and teraphim, and consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest. 6 In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes. 7 And there was a young man out of Bethlehemjudah of the family of Judah, who was a Levite, and he sojourned there. 8 And the man departed out of the city from*

*Bethlehemjudah to sojourn where he could find a place: and he came to mount Ephraim to the house of Micah, as he journeyed. 9 And Micah said unto him, Whence comest thou? And he said unto him, I am a Levite of Bethlehemjudah, and I go to sojourn where I may find a place. 10 And Micah said unto him, Dwell with me, and be unto me a father and a priest, and I will give thee ten shekels of silver by the year, and a suit of apparel, and thy victuals. So the Levite went in. 11 And the Levite was content to dwell with the man; and the young man was unto him as one of his sons. 12 And Micah consecrated the Levite; and the young man became his priest, and was in the house of Micah. 13 Then said Micah, Now know I that the LORD will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my priest.” (Judges 17:1-13 KJV)*

Here we can see how the ministry started. A woman, who had money stolen from her, probably knew that it was her son Micah who had done it. She cursed the one who stole and that made Micah afraid and so he went to his mother and confessed it to her. *“And he said unto his mother, The eleven hundred shekels of silver that were taken from thee, about which thou cursedst, and spakest of also in mine ears, behold, the silver is with me; I took it. And his mother said, Blessed be thou of the LORD, my son.” (Judges 17:2 KJV)* Micah was the thief, and the mother forgave him and blessed him.

*“And when he had restored the eleven hundred shekels of silver to his mother, his mother said, I had wholly dedicated the silver unto the LORD from my hand for my son, to make a graven image and a molten image: now therefore I will restore it unto thee.” (Judges 17:3 KJV)* When the mother received the money from her son, she vowed the entire money to God for her son to make a graven and molten image. We find here wrong principles and foundation for ministries. Just because the people have money, it doesn't mean that they can do their own will and promote their own idols and practices that contradict the Word of God.

*“Yet he restored the money unto his mother; and his mother took two hundred shekels of silver, and gave them to the founder, who made thereof a graven image and a molten image: and they were in the house of Micah.” (Judges 17:4 KJV)* She took two hundreds

shekels of the money and gave it to the founder, and the rest of the money was given to support Micah to do the ministry. The founder was willing to satisfy her request as long as he was paid. Is it not painful to know that idol worship that was prohibited in Israel was approved by the founder and by Micah just because they would receive money? Their god was their belly and their glory their shame. Paul was heartbroken and wept about such bad practices. ***“18 (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: 19 Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)” (Philippians 3:18-19 KJV)*** Even today, many walk in this manner and they don’t know what exactly is the written Word of God in the Bible and we find them starting new and independent ministries based on wrong principles promoted by their own desire and will.

Micah was a man with no principles and his focus was to receive material blessings rather than to please God, and for him, the ministry was only a business and a source of income. ***“5 And the man Micah had an house of gods, and made an ephod, and teraphim, and consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest.” (Judges 17:5 KJV)*** Micah made for himself an ephod and teraphim that he could use to inquire from God if someone approaches him for counsel and advice. He also taught his son and used him to sustain his ministry that was based on idol worship and greed. We should be discerning whom we chose to serve God. We are called to look for the faithful in the land and those who fear God and serve the Lord with them.

***“In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.” (Judges 17:6 KJV)*** We are living in those days now. People are immature and greedy with a distorted view of life. Even the church is weak and her leaders lackadaisical and complacent, and they do their own, what is right in their own eyes, based on covetousness and worldliness.

Birds of the same feather flock together. Micah’s folly was backed up by another greedy person who too was looking forward to doing his own will. ***“7 And there was a young man out of Bethlehemjudah of the family of Judah, who was a Levite, and he sojourned there.***

**8 And the man departed out of the city from Bethlehemjudah to sojourn where he could find a place: and he came to mount Ephraim to the house of Micah, as he journeyed.” (Judges 17:7-8 KJV)** When greedy people come together to do the ministry, it is not a sign of God’s approval nor can be used as a sign to confirm that what they are doing is right. This is totally untrue.

**“9 And Micah said unto him, Whence comest thou? And he said unto him, I am a Levite of Bethlehemjudah, and I go to sojourn where I may find a place. 10 And Micah said unto him, Dwell with me, and be unto me a father and a priest, and I will give thee ten shekels of silver by the year, and a suit of apparel, and thy victuals. So the Levite went in. 11 And the Levite was content to dwell with the man; and the young man was unto him as one of his sons. 12 And Micah consecrated the Levite; and the young man became his priest, and was in the house of Micah.” (Judges 17:9-12 KJV)** The Levite should have been the one to rebuke Micah for his idols because he knew the law of God, and he should have dissuaded him from going against God’s will and command. **“4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. 5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.” (Exodus 20:4-5 KJV)** Possibly, that was the first incident of idol worship mentioned after the Israelites entered into the Promised Land. The Levite should have explained to Micah that there was a place for worship and there were priests appointed by God to do the service of God and to serve the people according to the will of God. But how would the Levite have done that for he was greedy for material things and a comfortable lifestyle? He was drooling over the money that Micah had offered him, ten shekels of silver by the year, a suit of apparel, and also provision. **“I will give thee ten shekels of silver by the year, and a suit of apparel, and thy victuals. So the Levite went in.” (Judges 17:10 KJV)** Many corrupt ministers would hover around people offering them a living and would be willing to compromise with them and overlook the sin of the giver, as long as their needs are met. This is what Isaiah spoke about such ministers. **“10 His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb**

*dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. 11 Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter.” (Isaiah 56:10-11 KJV)* Church leaders are the watchmen and they should be alert to discern the sins of people and help them to realize and repent. They should rebuke the people and restrain them with the Word of God from running wild, as the dogs bark to restrain thieves while they are on the watch. If they fail to abide by that, then they have an ulterior motive, every one for his gain, and they are not after God’s will and purpose. They are lazy, greedy for gifts and money, and eager to be invited to eat at people’s banquets.

Such kind of ministers when confronted and asked why they choose to compromise, will say that God is forgiving and so they have to minister to the people in gentleness but the Bible says, *“Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.” (Luke 17:3 KJV)* They will also say that all people are sinners but they forget what the Bible says. *“19 Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; 20 Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.” (James 5:19-20 KJV)*

That Levite would have been more blessed if he had followed God; his needs would have been met in a better way. He misled others by teaching them how to earn their living. This is cheating and money from such a resource is cursed by God.

God definitely would not expect such behavior from a Levite. His covenant with Levi was a covenant of peace and he would have expected him to lead others. People approached the Levites and the priests to be instructed in God’s Word and to get the right direction from them. *“4 And ye shall know that I have sent this commandment unto you, that my covenant might be with Levi, saith the LORD of hosts. 5 My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name. 6 The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity,*

*and did turn many away from iniquity. 7 For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.” (Malachi 2:4-7 KJV) Therefore when church leaders and workers behave as that Levite behaved, then God’s anger will be stirred up and He will take action. “8 But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the LORD of hosts. 9 Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law.” (Malachi 2:8-9 KJV).*

The story of that Levite did not end there; his greed and covetousness progressed further to produce something worse. Let us read in the book of **Judges 18** how this Levite blessed the five men who were sent by the tribe of Dan to find a new place to replace the place of their inheritance.

*“1 In those days there was no king in Israel: and in those days the tribe of the Danites sought them an inheritance to dwell in; for unto that day all their inheritance had not fallen unto them among the tribes of Israel. 2 And the children of Dan sent of their family five men from their coasts, men of valour, from Zorah, and from Eshtaol, to spy out the land, and to search it; and they said unto them, Go, search the land: who when they came to mount Ephraim, to the house of Micah, they lodged there. 3 When they were by the house of Micah, they knew the voice of the young man the Levite: and they turned in thither, and said unto him, Who brought thee hither? and what makest thou in this place? and what hast thou here? 4 And he said unto them, Thus and thus dealeth Micah with me, and hath hired me, and I am his priest. 5 And they said unto him, Ask counsel, we pray thee, of God, that we may know whether our way which we go shall be prosperous. 6 And the priest said unto them, Go in peace: before the LORD is your way wherein ye go. 7 Then the five men departed, and came to Laish, and saw the people that were therein, how they dwelt careless, after the manner of the Zidonians, quiet and secure; and there was no magistrate in the land, that might put them to shame in any thing; and they were far from the Zidonians, and had no business with any man. 8 And they came unto their brethren to Zorah and Eshtaol: and their brethren*

*said unto them, What say ye? 9 And they said, Arise, that we may go up against them: for we have seen the land, and, behold, it is very good: and are ye still? be not slothful to go, and to enter to possess the land. 10 When ye go, ye shall come unto a people secure, and to a large land: for God hath given it into your hands; a place where there is no want of any thing that is in the earth. 11 And there went from thence of the family of the Danites, out of Zorah and out of Eshtaol, six hundred men appointed with weapons of war. 12 And they went up, and pitched in Kirjathjearim, in Judah: wherefore they called that place Mahanehdan unto this day: behold, it is behind Kirjathjearim. 13 And they passed thence unto mount Ephraim, and came unto the house of Micah. 14 Then answered the five men that went to spy out the country of Laish, and said unto their brethren, Do ye know that there is in these houses an ephod, and teraphim, and a graven image, and a molten image? now therefore consider what ye have to do. 15 And they turned thitherward, and came to the house of the young man the Levite, even unto the house of Micah, and saluted him. 16 And the six hundred men appointed with their weapons of war, which were of the children of Dan, stood by the entering of the gate. 17 And the five men that went to spy out the land went up, and came in thither, and took the graven image, and the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image: and the priest stood in the entering of the gate with the six hundred men that were appointed with weapons of war. 18 And these went into Micah's house, and fetched the carved image, the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image. Then said the priest unto them, What do ye? 19 And they said unto him, Hold thy peace, lay thine hand upon thy mouth, and go with us, and be to us a father and a priest: is it better for thee to be a priest unto the house of one man, or that thou be a priest unto a tribe and a family in Israel? 20 And the priest's heart was glad, and he took the ephod, and the teraphim, and the graven image, and went in the midst of the people. 21 So they turned and departed, and put the little ones and the cattle and the carriage before them. 22 And when they were a good way from the house of Micah, the men that were in the houses near to Micah's house were gathered together, and overtook the children of Dan. 23 And they cried unto the children of Dan. And they turned their faces, and said unto Micah, What aileth thee, that thou comest with such a company? 24 And he said, Ye have taken away my gods which I*



*made, and the priest, and ye are gone away: and what have I more? and what is this that ye say unto me, What aileth thee? 25 And the children of Dan said unto him, Let not thy voice be heard among us, lest angry fellows run upon thee, and thou lose thy life, with the lives of thy household. 26 And the children of Dan went their way: and when Micah saw that they were too strong for him, he turned and went back unto his house. 27 And they took the things which Micah had made, and the priest which he had, and came unto Laish, unto a people that were at quiet and secure: and they smote them with the edge of the sword, and burnt the city with fire. 28 And there was no deliverer, because it was far from Zidon, and they had no business with any man; and it was in the valley that lieth by Bethrehab. And they built a city, and dwelt therein. 29 And they called the name of the city Dan, after the name of Dan their father, who was born unto Israel: howbeit the name of the city was Laish at the first. 30 And the children of Dan set up the graven image: and Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, he and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan until the day of the captivity of the land. 31 And they set them up Micah's graven image, which he made, all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh.” (Judges 18:1-31 KJV)* At that time there was no king, so that Levite took more advantage of the situation. He blessed their journey to find a new place for living in addition to their inheritance. He did that without discretion and without inquiring of God’s will. He simply went ahead and agreed to their own wishes. Many ministers of God nowadays are shallow in their thoughts and words and accommodate sin in any form as long as they receive an income. To make matters worse, they dilute God’s infinite Word. The people approach such ministers who will approve whatever they wish. The five men saw the idols and knew it is wrong. But they approved it because there was somebody, the Levite, going along with their wishes.

Ultimately, they found the new place to settle and that was Laish and went up to take it with 600 men from the tribe of Dan. They came to Micah’s house and took all the idols and the rest of the things set up in his house. They also took the Levite, who agreed to go with them because they decided to make him a priest over their tribe. He was enticed by better payment and better living for that was his priority and reason for serving God. Nowadays, many are there like that Levite

who receive their income from wrong sources, to maintain their living and secure the future of their families. They will hang around the influential and powerful people and feed off them. For them, the ministry is like an auction. In an auction, who or what his/her source of income is, is not important but only the highest bidder so that the seller ultimately benefits. These people literally sell the Gospel for their own personal gain. ***“13 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. 14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. 15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.” (2 Corinthians 11:13-15 KJV)***

That Levite led that part of the tribe of Dan that dwelt in Liash into idol worship and it was a source of income to him and to his sons after him, till the time the Israelites were led into captivity. What havoc people who love money can cause in the Church of God! They use their ministry as their meal ticket to buffets; the income for their children in the future. They will go to occupy church offices to keep an income and in whatever way. They are not loyal to God, the one who feeds them and gives them their raiment. They oppress the poor and the weak and justify the strong and approve of those who give them a pittance when compared to God’s abundance. Their ministry seems to be prosperous and expanding as they go through the broad way, having chosen to bypass the narrow gate. ***“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat.” (Matthew 7:13 KJV)***

The name of that Levite was ***Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh***, and some commentaries suggest that Gershom was the son of Moses and Moses was the grandfather of this Levite. It is remarkable that the "nun", or "N" in Manasseh, is suspended over the other letters in the printed copies of the Hebrew Bible, and so without it, Manasseh may be read ‘Moses’ The Jews have the notion that this was done in honor of Moses, and to indicate that he was more like the son of Manasseh than of Moses. The point that I want to raise from this is how shameful an act this Levite did and it might have been just for the sake of Moses that he was not disciplined or suspended. In the same way, some of those who do wrong and abuse church offices to

earn their living, might not be disciplined just for the sake of the post that their father or their grandfather had held. But let us change our way of thinking because if we allow such people to live as parasites inside the Church of God, neither they nor their descendants nor those who are under their care, will be blessed by the Lord.

Contrary to this Levite, was Samuel another Levite who was so honest when it came to money matters. He challenged the congregation of God and he confronted them: ***“3 Behold, here I am: witness against me before the LORD, and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you. 4 And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken ought of any man's hand. 5 And he said unto them, The LORD is witness against you, and his anointed is witness this day, that ye have not found ought in my hand. And they answered, He is witness.”*** (1 Samuel 12:3-5 KJV) The testimony of God was kept intact and holiness preserved under the leadership of Samuel because he was very particular not to receive what was not allocated to him nor to approve of anything that was ungodly and not approved by God.

Samuel's sons were not like him; they received bribes and were rejected from the office of judge. ***“And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment.”*** (1 Samuel 8:3 KJV) And with their actions, the testimony of God was affected and the people used that as an excuse to ask Samuel to give them a king.

Therefore we need to understand that if we receive resources from wrong sources and people, then we will be allowing corruption to enter into the church and if that continues without being rectified, then sooner or later the church will deviate and tread into dangerous paths; that will be a costly mistake.

Simeon wanted to bribe Peter to receive the power of laying hands on people in order for them to receive the Holy Spirit like Peter and John did. ***“17 Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the***

***Holy Ghost. 18 And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, 19 Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. 20 But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. 21 Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. 22 Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. 23 For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. 24 Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the LORD for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me.***” (Acts 8:17-24 KJV) Peter was so assertive with Simeon and made him understand that by no means he would grant him his wish and compromise for the sake of money. The church should not swallow the bait of such kind of people who intentionally use their money to bribe the church, the ministers of the church and their leaders for their personal gain. The Lord would be displeased if we do that and the church will be weakened by an infiltration of people who will enter with their influence of money and not by the ordinance of the Holy Spirit.

Here is another story that teaches us to be discerning about peoples' offerings: ***“13 So she caught him, and kissed him, and with an impudent face said unto him, 14 I have peace offerings with me; this day have I payed my vows. 15 Therefore came I forth to meet thee, diligently to seek thy face, and I have found thee. 16 I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry, with carved works, with fine linen of Egypt.”*** (Proverbs 7:13-16 KJV) This married woman invited a man to share her bed while her husband was on a journey. And the same woman had offered in the morning her peace offering and paid her vows to God, but she did not keep herself holy. Many may come and go to church and continue to live in sin. Now, if we don't scrutinize the lives of such people who attend our congregations, then we are not doing well because these very same people will bring their offerings to the Church of God and they will assume that their life is hunky-dory and acceptable to God as long as they pay their vows financially. Their blood will be on our necks if we just receive their money, but do not point out their sins. Many churches nowadays team

with churchgoers who contribute financially but the church shows no concern or awareness of their lives as long as they are contributors. There are those who say that the larger in number the congregation, the more revenue for the church. To tell you the truth, such churches will never be blessed unless they repent of their wrongdoings and faulty principles.

## ***II. Wrong vows:***

***“21 When thou shalt vow a vow unto the LORD thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the LORD thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee 22 But if thou shalt forbear to vow, it shall be no sin in thee.” (Deuteronomy 23:21-22 KJV)***

We had expounded previously about the importance of fulfilling the vows, and that needs to be done with the knowledge of and in the presence of God’s people, His Church. We had also studied about the authority of the Church and her role in keeping the record of the tithes and offerings and keeping track if church members fulfill their vows in the manner required. Further, we expounded on the authority inside the family working side by side with the authority of the Church to supervise the fulfillment of the vows within the family. This is a kind of quality control to keep in check the fulfillment of vows and also avoid delays.

Another important aspect of it is to identify certain wrong vows that if fulfilled would bring harm to the person, the family, and even the church. The Bible speaks about certain vows that if we analyze would turn out to be unbiblical and in some cases even sinful. Therefore the church should avoid receiving what the people have vowed wrongly. The following are examples of such faulty vows:

***1. The Vow of Jephthah: “30 And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the LORD, and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands, 31 Then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the LORD’S, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering. 32 So Jephthah passed over***

*unto the children of Ammon to fight against them; and the LORD delivered them into his hands. 33 And he smote them from Aroer, even till thou come to Minnith, even twenty cities, and unto the plain of the vineyards, with a very great slaughter. Thus the children of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel. 34 And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house, and, behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances: and she was his only child; beside her he had neither son nor daughter. 35 And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he rent his clothes, and said, Alas, my daughter! thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me: for I have opened my mouth unto the LORD, and I cannot go back. 36 And she said unto him, My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth unto the LORD, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth; forasmuch as the LORD hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, even of the children of Ammon. 37 And she said unto her father, Let this thing be done for me: let me alone two months, that I may go up and down upon the mountains, and bewail my virginity, I and my fellows. 38 And he said, Go. And he sent her away for two months: and she went with her companions, and bewailed her virginity upon the mountains. 39 And it came to pass at the end of two months, that she returned unto her father, who did with her according to his vow which he had vowed: and she knew no man. And it was a custom in Israel, 40 That the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in a year.” (Judges 11:30-40 KJV)*

If Jephthah had followed the order that we outlined in fulfilling his vow, his daughter would not need to be sacrificed. Jephthah made a vow to the Lord in haste and had to sacrifice his daughter. Let me explain it. He is the father and has the authority over his family, and he was even the leader of the people of God. He could not go back on his vow to the Lord because he himself was the one who had vowed it. He needed to fulfill it. But according to the Word of God in *Deuteronomy 12:11*, “*Then there shall be a place which the LORD your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there; thither shall ye bring all that I command you; your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the heave offering of your hand, and all your choice vows which ye vow unto the LORD,*” He was supposed to bring his daughter to the tent of meeting to offer her as a burnt offering to the Lord. Instead, he took law into his own hands and made a foolish vow.

If Jephthah had brought his daughter to the tent of meeting, then the priest who was there would not have approved his vow because there was nothing in the Law of Moses that says someone could offer his daughter or son as a burnt offering. Then the priest who had the authority from God over the life of Jephthah could have exercised his power to break the vow of Jephthah which was unscriptural and set his daughter free. In this way, the priest also would have had the opportunity to do his duty well. The same rule applies today. The church should know what is going on in the life of her members and families and every valuable decision they have to make about various issues in their life should pass through the church to be examined if it is Biblical and based on Scripture or not. The church has the authority to disapprove wrong plans and wrong decisions including finances that are based on emotion, pride, or ambition. Each and every family in the church is a congregation in the Church of God and therefore the church should know and be aware of what is going on to protect the family members and to keep them on track. I have seen people who have vowed to give to God their firstfruit, their first month's income but don't have enough to sustain them for a living. I counsel them that first, they need to work for some time, give their tithes, spend wisely, save part of their income and then give their first fruit when there is plenty to fall back on. People's lives and their contributions must be transparent for effective ministry. We really need to verify the people's lives and the source of money before we receive because we are accountable before God for the lives of the people that He is sending to us.

***2. The vow of Absalom: "1 And it came to pass after this, that Absalom prepared him chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him. 2 And Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate: and it was so, that when any man that had a controversy came to the king for judgment, then Absalom called unto him, and said, Of what city art thou? And he said, Thy servant is of one of the tribes of Israel. 3 And Absalom said unto him, See, thy matters are good and right; but there is no man deputed of the king to hear thee. 4 Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice! 5 And it was so, that when any man came nigh to him to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand, and***

*took him, and kissed him. 6 And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment: so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel. 7 And it came to pass after forty years, that Absalom said unto the king, I pray thee, let me go and pay my vow, which I have vowed unto the LORD, in Hebron. 8 For thy servant vowed a vow while I abode at Geshur in Syria, saying, If the LORD shall bring me again indeed to Jerusalem, then I will serve the LORD. 9 And the king said unto him, Go in peace. So he arose, and went to Hebron. 10 But Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, As soon as ye hear the sound of the trumpet, then ye shall say, Absalom reigneth in Hebron. 11 And with Absalom went two hundred men out of Jerusalem, that were called; and they went in their simplicity, and they knew not any thing. 12 And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counsellor, from his city, even from Giloh, while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom.” (2 Samuel 15:1-12)* When Absalom vowed to serve the Lord, he didn't need to go to Hebron, because Hebron was not the place where the ark was located. In Hebron, he offered sacrifices but with the wrong motive, not to serve God but to destroy his father and ultimately the church. The ark was located in Jerusalem. David shouldn't have given permission to Absalom to go ahead to Hebron to fulfill his own destructive will.

Many like Absalom use the name of the Lord to do their own will. They deceive those who have trained them and cared for them, causing division and grievance inside the Church. Absalom went to Hebron, the city of the Levites and a city of Refuge, but it was not the place ordained by God for someone to fulfill his vow. What I want to say here is that if someone is really interested in serving God, then he should not move outside the framework of God's laws and ordinances. We need to be careful and discern the motive of the people and their real reason for their offer to fulfill their vows. Like Absalom did with David, others who join our ministries may do the same. Therefore we need to be careful of those who come and offer their service and money to God because some of their ulterior motives may be to kill, steal, and destroy.



I have had bitter experiences with such people who had entered our gates and offered finances and other sacrifices and offered themselves to serve God, but later on proved to be a malicious virus using their wrong vows to infect the church.

***3. The vow of the women at the time of Jeremiah to sacrifice to the queen of heaven: “1 The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the Jews which dwell in the land of Egypt, which dwell at Migdol, and at Tahpanhes, and at Noph, and in the country of Pathros, saying, 2 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Ye have seen all the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem, and upon all the cities of Judah; and, behold, this day they are a desolation, and no man dwelleth therein, 3 Because of their wickedness which they have committed to provoke me to anger, in that they went to burn incense, and to serve other gods, whom they knew not, neither they, ye, nor your fathers. 4 Howbeit I sent unto you all my servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, saying, Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate. 5 But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear to turn from their wickedness, to burn no incense unto other gods. 6 Wherefore my fury and mine anger was poured forth, and was kindled in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem; and they are wasted and desolate, as at this day. 7 Therefore now thus saith the LORD, the God of hosts, the God of Israel; Wherefore commit ye this great evil against your souls, to cut off from you man and woman, child and suckling, out of Judah, to leave you none to remain; 8 In that ye provoke me unto wrath with the works of your hands, burning incense unto other gods in the land of Egypt, whither ye be gone to dwell, that ye might cut yourselves off, and that ye might be a curse and a reproach among all the nations of the earth? 9 Have ye forgotten the wickedness of your fathers, and the wickedness of the kings of Judah, and the wickedness of their wives, and your own wickedness, and the wickedness of your wives, which they have committed in the land of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem? 10 They are not humbled even unto this day, neither have they feared, nor walked in my law, nor in my statutes, that I set before you and before your fathers. 11 Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will set my face against you for evil, and to cut off all Judah. 12 And I will take the remnant of Judah, that have set their faces to go into the land of Egypt to***

*sojourn there, and they shall all be consumed, and fall in the land of Egypt; they shall even be consumed by the sword and by the famine: they shall die, from the least even unto the greatest, by the sword and by the famine: and they shall be an execration, and an astonishment, and a curse, and a reproach. 13 For I will punish them that dwell in the land of Egypt, as I have punished Jerusalem, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence: 14 So that none of the remnant of Judah, which are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall escape or remain, that they should return into the land of Judah, to the which they have a desire to return to dwell there: for none shall return but such as shall escape. 15 Then all the men which knew that their wives had burned incense unto other gods, and all the women that stood by, a great multitude, even all the people that dwelt in the land of Egypt, in Pathros, answered Jeremiah, saying, 16 As for the word that thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the LORD, we will not hearken unto thee. 17 But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, as we have done, we, and our fathers, our kings, and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem: for then had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil. 18 But since we left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, we have wanted all things, and have been consumed by the sword and by the famine. 19 And when we burned incense to the queen of heaven, and poured out drink offerings unto her, did we make her cakes to worship her, and pour out drink offerings unto her, without our men? 20 Then Jeremiah said unto all the people, to the men, and to the women, and to all the people which had given him that answer, saying, 21 The incense that ye burned in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, ye, and your fathers, your kings, and your princes, and the people of the land, did not the LORD remember them, and came it not into his mind? 22 So that the LORD could no longer bear, because of the evil of your doings, and because of the abominations which ye have committed; therefore is your land a desolation, and an astonishment, and a curse, without an inhabitant, as at this day. 23 Because ye have burned incense, and because ye have sinned against the LORD, and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD, nor walked in his law, nor in his statutes, nor in his testimonies; therefore this evil is*

*happened unto you, as at this day. 24 Moreover Jeremiah said unto all the people, and to all the women, Hear the word of the LORD, all Judah that are in the land of Egypt: 25 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying; Ye and your wives have both spoken with your mouths, and fulfilled with your hand, saying, We will surely perform our vows that we have vowed, to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her: ye will surely accomplish your vows, and surely perform your vows. 26 Therefore hear ye the word of the LORD, all Judah that dwell in the land of Egypt; Behold, I have sworn by my great name, saith the LORD, that my name shall no more be named in the mouth of any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt, saying, The Lord GOD liveth. 27 Behold, I will watch over them for evil, and not for good: and all the men of Judah that are in the land of Egypt shall be consumed by the sword and by the famine, until there be an end of them. 28 Yet a small number that escape the sword shall return out of the land of Egypt into the land of Judah, and all the remnant of Judah, that are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall know whose words shall stand, mine, or theirs. 29 And this shall be a sign unto you, saith the LORD, that I will punish you in this place, that ye may know that my words shall surely stand against you for evil: 30 Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will give Pharaohhophra king of Egypt into the hand of his enemies, and into the hand of them that seek his life; as I gave Zedekiah king of Judah into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, his enemy, and that sought his life.” (Jeremiah 44:1-30 KJV)* The women vowed to give their offering to the queen of heaven, an idol, and their husbands condoned them and encouraged them to do it. That was a wrong vow and the men should have disapproved that. But they failed God and instead supported their wives in their wrongdoing. However, Jeremiah stood valiantly and rebuked them and nullified their vow and declared to them that what they had vowed was sinful and would bring the wrath of God on them. Church leaders should be firm to put the people in the right place. A church leader has been given authority from God. Therefore, when he doesn't compromise he is actually protecting the people and showing them the right way to live for God and serve His purpose. When church leaders compromise, they are pushing the people deeper into the miry clay by encouraging them to do what is sinful.

***“17 Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them. 18 For, behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brasen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. 19 And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the LORD, to deliver thee.” (Jeremiah 1:17-19 KJV)*** We need to be firm in asserting our leadership over our families, our wives, and children, and as leaders in the church and the ministry that we are placed in. We don't give in and give way to people who are deceivers and are in sin. We ought to use our authority that is from God to ensure that our families and the members of our ministries live in holiness. We should not be deceived or enticed by resources from wrong sources and invite trouble into our lives, the lives of our families, and ministries.

The prophecy of God to the prophet Ezekiel in Babylon about the crime and corruption in Jerusalem being the reason for God to utterly destroy the city will give us a clear warning about how we need to be careful not to allow people to use their money to manipulate the church.

***“12 In thee have they taken gifts to shed blood; thou hast taken usury and increase, and thou hast greedily gained of thy neighbours by extortion, and hast forgotten me, saith the Lord GOD. 13 Behold, therefore I have smitten mine hand at thy dishonest gain which thou hast made, and at thy blood which hath been in the midst of thee.” (Ezekiel 22:12-13 KJV)*** God was so angry at this point because inside Jerusalem, crimes were committed in the form of usury, greed, extortion and dishonest gain, manipulating the events, and affecting people's life adversely, that He smote his hand. Prophet Ezekiel continues to elaborate on what was going on in Jerusalem:

***“1 Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2 Now, thou son of man, wilt thou judge, wilt thou judge the bloody city? yea, thou shalt shew her all her abominations. 3 Then say thou, Thus saith the Lord GOD, The city sheddeth blood in the midst of it,***

*that her time may come, and maketh idols against herself to defile herself. 4 Thou art become guilty in thy blood that thou hast shed; and hast defiled thyself in thine idols which thou hast made; and thou hast caused thy days to draw near, and art come even unto thy years: therefore have I made thee a reproach unto the heathen, and a mocking to all countries. 5 Those that be near, and those that be far from thee, shall mock thee, which art infamous and much vexed.” (Ezekiel 22:1-5 KJV)*

Shedding of blood and idolatry was what was going on in Jerusalem. Fighting inside the church can be caused due to the wrong motive in the ministry and especially for financial gain. Corruption, manipulation, lust, and greed are some of the idols that people may worship in the New Testament and that would bring God’s judgment on the church. *“5 For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. 6 Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. 7 Be not ye therefore partakers with them.” (Ephesians 5:5-7 KJV)* God’s wrath will bring curses, lack and ultimately poverty to the church.

When the ministry becomes a source for living, then injustice, accepting gifts, bribery, slander, and lies will be widespread. In such churches, removing faithful people from the ministry and excluding them will become normal when money becomes the real motive. When faithful and genuine people don’t accept gifts and bribes offered to keep them silent about the ongoing sin, they will be excluded and/or executed. David tried to bribe Uriah by giving him food and drink. He got him drunk and made him go to his house to sleep with his wife of course with a wrong motive. But when David was not able to bribe Uriah, the latter was killed by the order of David in the battle. *“1 From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? 2 Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. 3 Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. 4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the*

***world is the enemy of God.”(James 4:1-4 KJV)*** In churches nursing wrong motives, where money is the priority, then fighting and quarreling will automatically creep in. When the church leaders are busy fighting for money and there is no one to deal with and rectify the existing sins, more sins will invade the church like dishonoring parents, oppression, despising the fatherless and the widows, profaning the Sabbath, adultery, and immorality; all these sins will be rampant. ***“7 In thee have they set light by father and mother: in the midst of thee have they dealt by oppression with the stranger: in thee have they vexed the fatherless and the widow. 8 Thou hast despised mine holy things, and hast profaned my sabbaths. 9 In thee are men that carry tales to shed blood: and in thee they eat upon the mountains: in the midst of thee they commit lewdness. 10 In thee have they discovered their fathers' nakedness: in thee have they humbled her that was set apart for pollution. 11 And one hath committed abomination with his neighbour's wife; and another hath lewdly defiled his daughter in law; and another in thee hath humbled his sister, his father's daughter.” (Ezekiel 22:7-11 KJV)***

Gradually, the prevalent wicked church leaders and workers will reject the prophets of God and drive out faithful people and persecute them. False prophets will be favored and promoted. When honest ministers will be terminated from service because they are not yielding to the ongoing corruption of the church, it will end up with no one being left to intercede for the mercy of God upon them and therefore ultimately such ministries will be finally destroyed by God as a result of His judgment. Let's be aware that God's judgment is on its way. ***“And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none.” (Ezekiel 22:30 KJV)***

***“23 And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 24 Son of man, say unto her, Thou art the land that is not cleansed, nor rained upon in the day of indignation.” (Ezekiel 22:23-24 KJV)*** Such churches are not cleansed from sins and God in his wrath would withhold his rain and blessings from them.

***“There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion ravening the prey; they have devoured souls; they have***

*taken the treasure and precious things; they have made her many widows in the midst thereof.” (Ezekiel 22:25 KJV)* Such churches have false prophets who devour souls and take the treasures from them. They will do all that they can to gain finances, treasure, and precious things from the members in whatever way possible. The Pharisees at the time of Jesus had devoured widows’ houses. **“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows’ houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.” (Matthew 23:14 KJV)** Paul spoke the following about them, **“For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts.” (2 Timothy 3:6 KJV)** They got the treasures and all the peoples’ precious things as fees for false and flattering prophecies. **“The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the LORD, and say, Is not the LORD among us? none evil can come upon us.” (Micah 3:11 KJV)** They even prepared war against those who would not give them and put not into their mouths. **“Thus saith the LORD concerning the prophets that make my people err, that bite with their teeth, and cry, Peace; and he that putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him.” (Micah 3:5 KJV).**

**“Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them.” (Ezekiel 22:26 KJV)** Their ministers and their teachers had violated the Law of God. They did not expound to the people the difference between sin and righteousness. They did not show to them their sins because they were afraid that they would lose their favor and financial support. Therefore, they did not correct the people when they violated the Sabbath and the Lord’s name was profaned in such circumstances. They hid their eyes from God’s Sabbaths; they took no care about them; it was all the same to them whether God’s Sabbaths were kept holy or not. They neither gave countenance to those who observed them nor checked those who profaned them. They winked at those who did servile works on that day and looked another way when they should have inspected the behavior of the people on Sabbath days. God’s Sabbaths had such beauty and glory put upon them by the

divine institution, but they hid their eyes from them and would not see excellence in them. By all this God Himself was profaned among them; His authority was slighted, His goodness made light of, and the highest affront and contempt imaginable were put upon His holiness. We need to understand that the profanation of the Scriptures, of Sabbaths and sacred things, is a profanation of the honor of God Himself. Therefore, when a man is favored and honored above the Lord, then God will be provoked and his wrath will be on its way.

***“Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravening the prey, to shed blood, and to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain.” (Ezekiel 22:27 KJV)*** When Naboth was slain, they took possession of his vineyard and seized the treasure which was an inheritance from his father.

***“And her prophets have daubed them with untempered mortar, seeing vanity, and divining lies unto them, saying, Thus saith the Lord GOD, when the LORD hath not spoken.” (Ezekiel 22:28 KJV)*** The definition of daubing is to cover or coat with soft, adhesive matter, as plaster or mud; to daub a canvas with paint; to daub stone walls with mud. The daubing prophets were the great supporters of ravening princes but will prove at last that they are great deceivers, for they daub with untempered mortar which will not hold, nor will the wall stand long that is built up with it.

The false prophets, who teach, fail to discipline those who do evil because they want to befriend them for their support. They also appoint such people to take up roles of leadership in the church and those church leaders with their poor testimonies will cause the church members to stumble in their Christian walk within and outside the church and abuse their power and authority.

When the church leaders are in such a pattern, then the people who listen to them will follow the bad example of their church leaders to abuse whoever around them or under them as soon as they are in power and have the opportunity. ***“29 The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy: yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully.” (Ezekiel 22:29 KJV)*** The people of the land had used oppression and exercised



robbery. The rich oppressed the poor, masters their servants, landlords their tenants, and even parents their own children.

***“And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none.” (Ezekiel 22:30 KJV)*** Ultimately, such churches will be devoid of righteous people. For they would be driven away. The wicked leaders will remain and there will be no one to stand in the gap and make intercession and offer prayers to God on behalf of the land.

***“Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath: their own way have I recompensed upon their heads, saith the Lord GOD.” (Ezekiel 22:31 KJV)*** Therefore God’s judgment is coming, coming fast, coming soon, and on its way to such churches. And instead of acquiring riches and glory, they will end in poverty and disgrace.

As church leaders, we need to examine the people’s lives and help them to live for God in holiness. We should not be interested to receive from those who are living in sin and are unwilling to live in holiness tithes and offerings. The church’s income should not come from secular ways of selling, buying, and making businesses, auctions, or use the church as a base for such things. What is ordained for the church to earn income from are the tithes, first fruits and the various offerings of the committed members (disciples) of the church. The church should not go to rich people or influential people who are not part of the church in order to collect money from them. That is against God’s principles. Also, the church should not tolerate sin and sinners for the sake of keeping the income of the church high. God will never meet the needs of such a church. In Micah 1:6-7, we can read that God would destroy the place of worship in Samaria for the place of worship was full of idols and was made rich by the offerings of people who prostituted themselves with the world, idols, and demons, and did not dedicate their lives to honour and follow God, ***“6 Therefore I will make Samaria as an heap of the field, and as plantings of a vineyard: and I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley, and I will discover the foundations thereof. 7 And all the graven images thereof shall be beaten to pieces, and all the hires thereof shall be***

***burned with the fire, and all the idols thereof will I lay desolate: for she gathered it of the hire of an harlot , and they shall return to the hire of an harlot.*** (Micah 1:6-7 KJV) If the church will not keep rebuking the people for their sins and keep silent so they will continue giving money to the church, then the church is giving them a wrong message and is encouraging them to continue to sin and to live in sin. As we had read in ***Micah 1***, the final outcome will be destruction; both the church and the people will be consumed if sin is not dealt with properly.

# Chapter Eight:

## *Store Houses, Versus Empty Houses*

*“There is treasure to be desired and oil in the dwelling of the wise; but a foolish man spendeth it up.” (Proverbs 21:20 KJV)*

*“Behold, I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts; and one shall take you away with it.” (Malachi 2:3 KJV)*

The Bible tells us that the things collected from the people, the tithes and the offerings and various kinds of income are to be kept in storehouses and treasuries in the church. A record of it has to be maintained and it has to be stored carefully until it is used.

Let us meditate on these examples from the Scriptures:

### *I. Storehouses:*

*“And the famine was over all the face of the earth: and Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold unto the Egyptians; and the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt.” (Genesis 41:56 KJV)*

*“The LORD shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto; and he shall bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.” (Deuteronomy 28:8 KJV)*

*“Storehouses also for the increase of corn, and wine, and oil; and stalls for all manner of beasts, and cotes for flocks.” (2 Chronicles 32:28 KJV)*

*“Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a*

*blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.” (Malachi 3:10 KJV)*

## *II. Treasuries:*

*“But all the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are consecrated unto the LORD: they shall come into the treasury of the LORD.” (Joshua 6: 19 KJV)*

*“And they burnt the city with fire, and all that was therein: only the silver, and the gold, and the vessels of brass and of iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD.” (Joshua 6:24 KJV)*

*“For these Levites, the four chief porters, were in their set office, and were over the chambers and treasuries of the house of God.” (1 Chronicles 9:26 KJV)*

*“Then David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch, and of the houses thereof, and of the treasuries thereof, and of the upper chambers thereof, and of the inner parlours thereof, and of the place of the mercy seat.” (1 Chronicles 28:11 KJV)*

*“And the pattern of all that he had by the spirit, of the courts of the house of the LORD, and of all the chambers round about, of the treasuries of the house of God, and of the treasuries of the dedicated things.” (1 Chronicles 28:12 KJV)*

*“Thus all the work that Solomon made for the house of the LORD was finished: and Solomon brought in all the things that David his father had dedicated; and the silver, and the gold, and all the instruments, put he among the treasures of the house of God.” (2 Chronicles 5:1 KJV)*

*“And Hezekiah had exceeding much riches and honour: and he made himself treasuries for silver, and for gold, and for precious stones, and for spices, and for shields, and for all manner of pleasant jewels.” (2 Chronicles 32:27 KJV)*

***“Then brought all Judah the tithes of the corn and the new wine and the oil unto the treasuries. (Nehemiah 13:12 KJV)***

***“And I made treasurers over the treasuries, Shelemiah the priest, and Zadok the scribe, and of the Levites, Pedaiah: and next to them was Hanan the son of Zaccur, the son of Mattaniah: for they were counted faithful, and their office was to distribute unto their brethren.” (Nehemiah 13:13 KJV)***

***“So Ebedmelech took the men with him, and went into the house of the king under the treasury, and took thence old cast clouts and old rotten rags, and let them down by cords into the dungeon to Jeremiah.” (Jeremiah 38:11 KJV)***

***“And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood.” (Matthew 27:6 KJV)***

***“And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much.” (Mark 12:41 KJV)***

***“And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury.” (Mark 12:43 KJV)***

***“And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury.” (Luke 21:1 KJV)***

***“These words spake Jesus in the treasury, as he taught in the temple: and no man laid hands on him; for his hour was not yet come.” (John 8:20 KJV)***

***“This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.” (John 12:6 KJV)***

The Scripture informs us that the money collected from people:

1. is not the personal property of anyone but God's
2. is not to be put into the purse (wallet) or pocket of a person
3. is to be stored in storehouses, treasuries, or bags
4. is to be under the responsibility of certain people

The following Scriptures will reveal to us who should be responsible for the people's contribution to the church:

*“The sons of Jehieli; Zetham, and Joel his brother, which were over the treasures of the house of the LORD.” (1 Chronicles 26:22 KJV)*

*“And Shebuel the son of Gershom, the son of Moses, was ruler of the treasures.” (1 Chronicles 26:24 KJV)*

*“Which Shelomith and his brethren were over all the treasures of the dedicated things, which David the king, and the chief fathers, the captains over thousands and hundreds, and the captains of the host, had dedicated.” (1 Chronicles 26:26 KJV)*

*“And over the king's treasures was Azmaveth the son of Adiel: and over the storehouses in the fields, in the cities, and in the villages, and in the castles, was Jehonathan the son of Uzziah.” (1 Chronicles 27:25 KJV)*

*“And they departed not from the commandment of the king unto the priests and Levites concerning any matter, or concerning the treasures.” (2 Chronicles 8:15 KJV)*

*“And at that time were some appointed over the chambers for the treasures, for the offerings, for the firstfruits, and for the tithes, to gather into them out of the fields of the cities the portions of the law for the priests and Levites: for Judah rejoiced for the priests and for the Levites that waited.” (Nehemiah 12:44 KJV)*

*“For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor.” (John 13:29 KJV)*

The purpose of God for such an arrangement is the following:

- 1- No one out of greed will covet them.
- 2- No one, who covets and has greed, will have the opportunity to be tempted and to be able to steal.
- 3- To store and preserve the treasures for over long periods of time in order to meet the needs when they arise especially because some of these materials that are stored are organic materials.
- 4- To keep a clear record of what is collected and stored, so that the data can be used in the planning of certain projects.
- 5- To keep a reserve to fill the gap in time of scarcity and famine.

The storehouses that keep the money of the church like metal treasuries, bank accounts, or other means, how much is the amount of money, how is the money organized, and to what is the money allocated reflect the maturity of the church and the attitude of the people who are in charge of serving the Lord in the church.

The church that is organized in dealing with finances and is totally transparent in its financial dealings, displays maturity and integrity and the right attitude in serving the Lord.

The Scripture shows us that there were people who had built up the treasuries and the storehouses to do mighty exploits for God.

For example, King David built up a big treasury for the house of God and he included all that was collected before him and he organized a team of Levites to manage it properly as we can read below:

***“20 And of the Levites, Ahijah was over the treasures of the house of God, and over the treasures of the dedicated things. 21 As concerning the sons of Laadan; the sons of the Gershonite Laadan, chief fathers, even of Laadan the Gershonite, were Jehieli. 22 The sons of Jehieli; Zetham, and Joel his brother, which were over the treasures of the house of the LORD. 23 Of the Amramites, and the Izharites, the Hebronites, and the Uzzielites: 24 And Shebuel the son of Gershom, the son of Moses, was ruler of the treasures. 25 And his brethren by Eliezer; Rehabiah his son, and Jeshaiiah his son, and***

*Joram his son, and Zichri his son, and Shelomith his son. 26 Which Shelomith and his brethren were over all the treasures of the dedicated things, which David the king, and the chief fathers, the captains over thousands and hundreds, and the captains of the host, had dedicated. 27 Out of the spoils won in battles did they dedicate to maintain the house of the LORD. 28 And all that Samuel the seer, and Saul the son of Kish, and Abner the son of Ner, and Joab the son of Zeruiah, had dedicated; and whosoever had dedicated any thing, it was under the hand of Shelomith, and of his brethren.” (1 Chronicles 26:20-28 KJV)*

This treasury was used to support the building of the Temple of God in Jerusalem. It reminds me of what Jesus said, *“28 For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? 29 Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, 30 Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.” (Luke 14:28-30 KJV)* How can we sit down and plan to do great things for God without having adequate finances? It requires good stewardship to collect finances patiently and to be disciplined in spending. If we look at the life of David, his life was full of suffering and he had to face repeated battles. However, when he won victories over the nations around him and got plunder, he collected and preserved for the work of God instead of spending it on himself. He gathered much and saved it to build a house for God. He did not spend it on himself because it was in his heart to honor God. He had no selfishness, greed, or wrong motive. He was not taking it as a source for a living or a way to increase his own treasures but his heart was knit with God to do HIS work on earth.

The Scriptures also shows leaders who had shown the wrong attitude towards God and that was reflected in the treasuries and storehouses of the house of God. We will study how these leaders with their disobedience, bad attitude, and lack of faith, pulled it down.

***1. Rehoboam the king, the son of Solomon:*** He did evil in the eyes of the Lord with the people of Judah, and therefore, God allowed the enemies to come and take important treasures. Rehoboam and the people with him did the following evils: *“21 And Rehoboam the son*



*of Solomon reigned in Judah. Rehoboam was forty and one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the LORD did choose out of all the tribes of Israel, to put his name there. And his mother's name was Naamah an Ammonitess. 22 And Judah did evil in the sight of the LORD, and they provoked him to jealousy with their sins which they had committed, above all that their fathers had done. 23 For they also built them high places, and images, and groves, on every high hill, and under every green tree. 24 And there were also sodomites in the land: and they did according to all the abominations of the nations which the LORD cast out before the children of Israel. 25 And it came to pass in the fifth year of king Rehoboam, that Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem: 26 And he took away the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house; he even took away all: and he took away all the shields of gold which Solomon had made. 27 And king Rehoboam made in their stead brasen shields, and committed them unto the hands of the chief of the guard, which kept the door of the king's house. 28 And it was so, when the king went into the house of the LORD, that the guard bare them, and brought them back into the guard chamber.”(1 Kings 14:21-28 KJV)* They built and spent not only on unnecessary things but on things harmful that God had prohibited, and in this way, they made God jealous of them and they added to the sins of their fathers.

**A. For they also built them high places:** High places are counterfeits of the temple of God and people were prohibited to worship God in them. They had a centralized form of worship where they needed to go inside the temple of God in Jerusalem under the supervision of the priests and not to other places. The people went to the high places to do their own and not be open to the scrutiny of the priests of the temple. In the high places, they spent their treasures against the will of God. Many Christians attend worship in the church at the weekend but for the rest of the days they do their own in the high places and the church leaders keep quiet about it for fear of losing their members. Spending on things not ordained by God will finally weaken the individuals, the family and finally the church. That is why many families and churches are in debt.

**B. Images:** These are idols and figures that they admire, adorn, and put their trust on, instead of putting their trust on the Lord, or on His Words and commands. They spent on all these things instead of spending and dedicating what they have unto God. We as a church should be tactful and discerning to break down and demolish idols in the life of the people; idols they cling on to and depend on without putting God first.

**C. Groves:** *“Thou shalt not plant thee a grove of any trees near unto the altar of the Lord thy God, which thou shalt make thee.”* (Deuteronomy 16:21 KJV) Groves are gardens planted around altars to beautify them in order to make the worship places more appealing to the senses. Nowadays, food, festivals, appealing music, sophisticated sound systems, elaborate lighting, lasers, and sound effects are used by churches to attract and appeal to the sensuality of the people. Some of these churches are like discotheques. God does not want people to come to Him because of their affinity to sensuality, but He is looking for true worshippers who will worship Him in spirit and in truth and be drawn to Him for His Word. The responsibility lies in our hands.

**D. There were also sodomites (homosexuals) in the land:** Homosexuals were also in the land. Homosexuality is not only a sin as in adultery, stealing, or idol worship, but it is an abomination. *“Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination.”* (Leviticus 18:22 KJV) Incest and bestiality are other abominations mentioned in *Leviticus 18*. Selling the lives of your children to the devil and making them walk through the fire and destroying their lives with ungodly practices is another abomination. *“Thou shalt not do so unto the Lord thy God: for every abomination to the Lord, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods.”* (Deuteronomy 12:31 KJV)

**There were also sodomites (homosexuals) in the land,** and let us put it in this way, **there were also \_\_\_\_\_ in the land:** It means that they had tolerated this sin and were not bothered or disturbed by it. Abomination is anything that causes disgust or loathing a thing to abhor or hate. When people accept to live with sin without hating it, it

is time for God's anger and jealousy to be kindled against them. ***"21 Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils. 22 Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?" (1 Corinthians 10:21-22 KJV)***

***E. And they did according to all the abominations of the nations which the LORD cast out before the children of Israel:*** When the people of God do such things as the unbelievers or even worse things, then it will be time for God to stretch out His rod of discipline towards such people and take away from them what He had given them.

God did the following to discipline His people: ***"2 And it came to pass, that in the fifth year of king Rehoboam Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, because they had transgressed against the LORD, 3 With twelve hundred chariots, and threescore thousand horsemen: and the people were without number that came with him out of Egypt; the Lubims, the Sukkiims, and the Ethiopians. 4 And he took the fenced cities which pertained to Judah, and came to Jerusalem."*** (2 Chronicles 12:2-4 KJV) The meaning of Shishak is "greedy of fine linen." God will send someone greedy to discipline His people and to makes them realize that they should not have spent of what God had given them on wrong things. Economic penalties, fines, bankruptcy, and theft are some of the ways used by God to discipline His church and His people who had squandered what He had given them in their pursuit of worldliness in high places. ***"So Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, and took away the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house; he took all: he carried away also the shields of gold which Solomon had made."*** (2 Chronicles 12:9 KJV) The people of God will face impoverishment when they end up doing abominations in the sight of God. This kind of poverty and impoverishment is caused by sin and is different from the other state of poverty. When King Rehoboam lost his treasures, he replaced the shields of gold that Shishak had taken with shields of bronze. This had nothing to do with good stewardship with regarding saving, but he was forced to replace them with bronze because of his impoverished state. Let us keep this point in our mind, that if we don't behave, then we will just have to wait for Shishak to come upon us and take away everything from us. But if we fear God and live for Him, then, even if we are attacked by enemies like

Shishak, our treasures will be preserved by God whom we have revered and honored, by valuing the things that He has given us.

***2. Asa the King of Judah: "1 In the six and thirtieth year of the reign of Asa Baasha king of Israel came up against Judah, and built Ramah, to the intent that he might let none go out or come in to Asa king of Judah. 2 Then Asa brought out silver and gold out of the treasures of the house of the LORD and of the king's house, and sent to Benhadad king of Syria, that dwelt at Damascus, saying, 3 There is a league between me and thee, as there was between my father and thy father: behold, I have sent thee silver and gold; go, break thy league with Baasha king of Israel, that he may depart from me. 4 And Benhadad hearkened unto king Asa, and sent the captains of his armies against the cities of Israel; and they smote Ijon, and Dan, and Abelmaim, and all the store cities of Naphtali. 5 And it came to pass, when Baasha heard it, that he left off building of Ramah, and let his work cease. 6 Then Asa the king took all Judah; and they carried away the stones of Ramah, and the timber thereof, wherewith Baasha was building; and he built therewith Geba and Mizpah. 7 And at that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah, and said unto him, Because thou hast relied on the king of Syria, and not relied on the LORD thy God, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thine hand. 8 Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubims a huge host, with very many chariots and horsemen? yet, because thou didst rely on the LORD, he delivered them into thine hand. 9 For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him. Herein thou hast done foolishly: therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars. 10 Then Asa was wroth with the seer, and put him in a prison house; for he was in a rage with him because of this thing. And Asa oppressed some of the people the same time." (2 Chronicles 16:1-10 KJV)***

In the previous chapters, 2 Chronicles 14 and 15, King Asa had done very well and achieved wonderful victories for himself and for the people of God and he obtained a big plunder and had built the treasure house of God. But in 2 Chronicles 16, King Asa was faced with multiple problems which he did not handle in accordance with God's Word and will, and for this reason was not able to sustain his riches.

We need to understand that trials and problems are not intended to break us and makes us fail, but to perfect us and to enable us to achieve further victories in our lives. King Asa's troubles mentioned in 2 Chronicles 16 were not intended to ruin him but to enable him to be more than a conqueror. Therefore, let us learn a valuable lesson from King Asa's life and face trials considering them stepping stones to promotion in life and more victories.

***“In the six and thirtieth year of the reign of Asa Baasha king of Israel came up against Judah, and built Ramah, to the intent that he might let none go out or come in to Asa king of Judah.” (2 Chronicles 16:1 KJV)*** King Asa was conspired against and betrayed by the king of Israel. The King of Israel intended to block King Asa and all of Judah. This was a dirty game, and God allowed that for a purpose. He did not intend to harm Asa or Judah but he was testing their reaction. God was waiting for King Asa to sustain his achievements and reap another victory by relying on God to solve the problem. But, let us see how King Asa acted:

***“Then Asa brought out silver and gold out of the treasures of the house of the LORD and of the king's house, and sent to Benhadad king of Syria, that dwelt at Damascus, saying.” (2 Chronicles 16:2 KJV)*** King Asa's first response was to use his finances to solve the problem. He did not even pray, inquire, or cry to God to aid him. When we face a problem in our lives, the first thing we should do is to run to God. We don't rely on our money or on people, or on what we have to solve it. King Asa should not have used his resources after what he had experienced previously. God's hand of deliverance had saved him from the one million strong armies of the Ethiopians and the Lubims. King Asa lost the treasures that God had given him when he failed to put his full trust in God. We will lose our treasure and all the material things God has given us when we fail to trust God and not rely on Him and on His promises when we face the 'storms of life'.

***“There is a league between me and thee, as there was between my father and thy father: behold, I have sent thee silver and gold; go, break thy league with Baasha king of Israel, that he may depart from me.” (2 Chronicles 16:3 KJV)*** King Asa made a league with non-

believers to solve his problem. He should not do that, but first, he should go to God and pray to God according to the covenant that he had with Him. We should not rely on the arm of the flesh or on our money to solve our problems. Let us go first to God and if He will use some people to solve the problem, then He will either guide us to them or He will bring them to us.

***“4 And Benhadad hearkened unto king Asa, and sent the captains of his armies against the cities of Israel; and they smote Ijon, and Dan, and Abelmaim, and all the store cities of Naphtali. 5 And it came to pass, when Baasha heard it, that he left off building of Ramah, and let his work cease. 6 Then Asa the king took all Judah; and they carried away the stones of Ramah, and the timber thereof, wherewith Baasha was building; and he built therewith Geba and Mizpah.” (2 Chronicles 16:4-6 KJV)*** King Asa’s victory, plunder, and achievement were not from God but it was seemingly accomplished by the arm of flesh using money. When Christians compromise, they seem to achieve things in the name of God’s ministry and the church. Nowadays, churches choose to covenant with non believers to support and to enlarge the ministry. They collect money from rich people and non believers to solve their financial problem. But compromises are never useful and are not ordained or blessed by God. The more the church compromises today, the more the church is losing her power and authority.

***“And at that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah.” (2 Chronicles 16:7 KJV)*** This man of God rebuked King Asa for his wrongdoing. I pray that the message in our hands is a rebuke to us if we are found unfaithful as King Asa was. The seer Hanani explained further the bad consequences of his compromises, ***“And said unto him, Because thou hast relied on the king of Syria, and not relied on the LORD thy God, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thine hand. 8 Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubims a huge host, with very many chariots and horsemen? yet, because thou didst rely on the LORD, he delivered them into thine hand.” (2 Chronicles 16:7-8 KJV)*** Compromises and lack of trust in God will pave the way for our failure and loss of plunder and blessings that God had prepared for us to harvest. When God allows problems in the life of the church, it is not to bring in a loss in finances but get plunder. ***“For the eyes of***

*the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him. Herein thou hast done foolishly: therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars.” (2 Chronicles 16:9 KJV)* God will strengthen those who trust Him and stand before Him with a perfect heart. That is why the Bible says that the righteous are as bold as lions. *“The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion.” (Proverbs 28:1 KJV)* Every compromise made by the church will weaken her more and more. Compromises and the lack of trust in God are sins and will invite God’s wrath upon our lives as a consequence of our sins. The church will become a skid row as a result of the church handling crisis in a worldly way.

*“Then Asa was wroth with the seer, and put him in a prison house; for he was in a rage with him because of this thing. And Asa oppressed some of the people the same time.” (2 Chronicles 16:10 KJV)* King Asa was angry with the man of God who had pointed out his sin and corrected him. The purpose of God and the man of God is to spare people from troubles and lead them to repentance. Never be angry with those who point out our sins, mistakes, and shortcomings in the light of the Scriptures. They do it out of pure concern only for our own good and for the good of others. Asa oppressed some of the people most likely out of pride because he was rebuked publicly. Let us be honest with ourselves and accept correction and not retaliate neither with those who correct us nor with the other innocent people around us. *“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,” (Ephesians 5:15 KJV)*

*2. Jehoash king of Judah: “17 Then Hazael king of Syria went up, and fought against Gath, and took it: and Hazael set his face to go up to Jerusalem. 18 And Jehoash king of Judah took all the hallowed things that Jehoshaphat, and Jehoram, and Ahaziah, his fathers, kings of Judah, had dedicated, and his own hallowed things, and all the gold that was found in the treasures of the house of the LORD, and in the king's house, and sent it to Hazael king of Syria: and he went away from Jerusalem.” (2 Kings 12:17-18 KJV)* King Jehoash was not willing to stand and fight. Some church leaders just live for themselves and they are not willing to face challenges nor suffer for their faith. It is easy for them to squander what others have

labored hard for, to ensure that they don't get into strife. They don't have the correct faith that the Scripture teaches about nor are they living in obedience, and they choose to lose the battle being aware of the fact that God is not with them who have sinned.

**3. Ahaz king of Judah:** “ *5 Then Rezin king of Syria and Pekah son of Remaliah king of Israel came up to Jerusalem to war: and they besieged Ahaz, but could not overcome him. 6 At that time Rezin king of Syria recovered Elath to Syria, and drave the Jews from Elath: and the Syrians came to Elath, and dwelt there unto this day. 7 So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglathpileser king of Assyria, saying, I am thy servant and thy son: come up, and save me out of the hand of the king of Syria, and out of the hand of the king of Israel, which rise up against me. 8 And Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasures of the king's house, and sent it for a present to the king of Assyria.” (2 Kings 16:5-8 KJV) King Ahaz is another king who never lived in line with the Scripture, and what he did with the treasures was one of his shortcomings. He trusted the non-believers as if he was a stranger to God and His ways, and he used money thinking it would solve the problem. “*20 And Tilgathpilneser king of Assyria came unto him, and distressed him, but strengthened him not. 21 For Ahaz took away a portion out of the house of the LORD, and out of the house of the king, and of the princes, and gave it unto the king of Assyria: but he helped him not. 22 And in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the LORD: this is that king Ahaz.” (2 Chronicles 28:20-22 KJV)**

**4. Hezekiah king of Judah:** “*13 Now in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah did Sennacherib king of Assyria come up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them. 14 And Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria to Lachish, saying, I have offended; return from me: that which thou puttest on me will I bear. And the king of Assyria appointed unto Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. 15 And Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasures of the king's house. 16 At that time did Hezekiah cut off the gold from the doors of the temple of the LORD, and from the pillars which Hezekiah king of Judah had*



***overlaid, and gave it to the king of Assyria.” (2 Kings 18:13-16 KJV)***

Very clearly we can see here that money cannot be used to stop people from attacking and threatening the church. King Hezekiah paid and apologized to the king of Assyria, but it did not work. We really cannot use the money to make friends, to please people, or to pacify wicked people. Paul was kept two years in prison by Felix to force Paul to pay him money but Paul didn't succumb to it. We should not be intimidated by people who threaten to leave the church or service because they feel they have not been paid the money that they were expecting. When such people leave the church, it is a blessing, and the church will progress better without them. We need to face wickedness and deal with those who try to extort us or take advantage of us. They are greedy and ungrateful. The more we give them money and the more we try to befriend them, the more they will abuse us and abuse the grace of God that is reaching them through our lives. Finally, king Hezekiah and Judah faced the threats of King Sennacherib and God assisted them and dealt with the enemy in a marvelous way as we can read here, ***“32 Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it. 33 By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the LORD. 34 For I will defend this city, to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake. 35 And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the LORD went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses. 36 So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh. 37 And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword: and they escaped into the land of Armenia. And Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead.” (2 Kings 19:32-37 KJV)*** We need to do the same. God will give us true victory over the wicked when we rely on Him and not on our money. Not only that, but the Lord will bring more and better people instead of those unfaithful, and will establish His church.

***5. Hezekiah king of Judah: “12 At that time Berodachbaladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present unto Hezekiah: for he had heard that Hezekiah had been sick. 13 And***

*Hezekiah hearkened unto them, and shewed them all the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah shewed them not. 14 Then came Isaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him, What said these men? and from whence came they unto thee? And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country, even from Babylon. 15 And he said, What have they seen in thine house? And Hezekiah answered, All the things that are in mine house have they seen: there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shewed them. 16 And Isaiah said unto Hezekiah, Hear the word of the LORD. 17 Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store unto this day, shall be carried into Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD. 18 And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon. 19 Then said Hezekiah unto Isaiah, Good is the word of the LORD which thou hast spoken. And he said, Is it not good, if peace and truth be in my days?" (2 Kings 20:12-19 KJV)* Out of sheer boasting and flamboyance, King Hezekiah behaved in such a way.

The Word of God tells us the following: *"31 Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to enquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart."* (2 Chronicles 32:31 KJV) Those people from Babylon came to Hezekiah to ask him about the miraculous sign that had occurred in the land, but Hezekiah did not speak about the Lord but boasted about his possessions. You may ask why Isaiah hadn't warned him about it. God wanted it to happen in this way so that what was in Hezekiah's heart would be exposed. Certain sins and bad attitudes are only exposed in certain situations.

Hezekiah showed no discretion but utter ingratitude and selfishness as he used the words *'mine and my'*. *"15 And he said, What have they seen in thine house? And Hezekiah answered, All the things that are in mine house have they seen: there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shewed them."* (2 Kings 20:15 KJV) He considered all

that he had his rather than from the Lord and for the Lord. Some people think that what God has given to the church is for them to enjoy, forgetting and putting aside the purpose of God in their lives.

God, at that instance, had sent the prophet Isaiah to rebuke Hezekiah in order to show him his sin to correct him. ***“16 And Isaiah said unto Hezekiah, Hear the word of the LORD. 17 Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store unto this day, shall be carried into Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD. 18 And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.”*** (2 Kings 20:16-18 KJV) The rebuke of God to Hezekiah showed him that he was totally self-centered, careless, and insensitive about his descendants and the next generation to come. Boasting will make us susceptible to the attack of the enemy. When we show off our treasures, the enemies will covet and attack us.

Hezekiah did not have the mind of Christ like the prophet Isaiah whose heart was set on the Lord and on the well being of the next generation. Hezekiah showed no repentance this time. Previously, when Isaiah had informed him on his deathbed that he would die, Hezekiah humbled down. But, on this occasion, since he had plenty and was in good health and God had already answered his prayer and he was living in peace with no threat around him, he did not humble down and repent before the prophet Isaiah when the latter rebuked him. This was how he had answered the Prophet Isaiah ***“Then said Hezekiah unto Isaiah, Good is the word of the LORD which thou hast spoken. And he said, Is it not good, if peace and truth be in my days?”*** (2 Kings 20:19 KJV) This boastful attitude of Hezekiah shows clearly that his heart was not perfect in God’s eyes and he needed to be perfected. Isaiah, the faithful man of God, was sent by Him to Hezekiah for this purpose. But Hezekiah boasted to Isaiah and took all the glory for his financial prosperity and the state of peace that his kingdom was enjoying without giving the glory to God. ***“Is it not good, if peace and truth be in my days?”*** (2 Kings 20:19 KJV) Many Christians will boast about their material prosperity when they are corrected, thinking that their jobs, money, and wealth are the stamp of the approval of God. God

gives good things in order to lead us to repentance. Therefore, we need to pay heed to the message and repent.

Finally, what God threatened to do through the prophet Isaiah took place when the army of Babylonian destroyed Jerusalem and took all the precious things. Hezekiah's sin of vanity and selfishness was exposed by God. Hezekiah didn't think of passing on the blessings that he had received from God to His descendants. His pride and boasting refused him the correction. Spiritual wrongdoings and shortcomings of parents and church leaders and their unwillingness to repent and be restored will put their descendants in a tight corner.

**6. *Eliashib the priest:*** Eliashib the priest had entered into an agreement with one of the enemies of Nehemiah's work of rebuilding the wall – Tobiah, the Ammonite and enabled him to occupy rooms in the courts of the temple of God where the grain offerings, the frankincense, the articles, the tithes of grain, the new wine and oils were stored. The work that Nehemiah had started was destroyed by the careless and selfish priest, Eliashib. ***“4 And before this, Eliashib the priest, having the oversight of the chamber of the house of our God, was allied unto Tobiah: 5 And he had prepared for him a great chamber, where aforetime they laid the meat offerings, the frankincense, and the vessels, and the tithes of the corn, the new wine, and the oil, which was commanded to be given to the Levites, and the singers, and the porters; and the offerings of the priests.” (Nehemiah 13:4-5 KJV)*** Many are selfish and do not care about the future of the church, but they are only concerned about their personal affairs. When Nehemiah came to know about it, he wasn't one just to sit back and grieve. He took action – throwing all Tobiah's stuff out of the rooms he had occupied in the temple courts, then ceremonially cleansing the rooms, and finally by putting the rooms to their proper use – as storerooms for the sacred things of the temple. ***“6 But in all this time was not I at Jerusalem: for in the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon came I unto the king, and after certain days obtained I leave of the king: 7 And I came to Jerusalem, and understood of the evil that Eliashib did for Tobiah, in preparing him a chamber in the courts of the house of God. 8 And it grieved me sore: therefore I cast forth all the household stuff to Tobiah out of the chamber. 9 Then I commanded, and they cleansed the chambers:***

*and thither brought I again the vessels of the house of God, with the meat offering and the frankincense. 10 And I perceived that the portions of the Levites had not been given them: for the Levites and the singers, that did the work, were fled every one to his field. 11 Then contended I with the rulers, and said, Why is the house of God forsaken? And I gathered them together, and set them in their place. 12 Then brought all Judah the tithe of the corn and the new wine and the oil unto the treasuries. 13 And I made treasurers over the treasuries, Shelemiah the priest, and Zadok the scribe, and of the Levites, Pedaiah: and next to them was Hanan the son of Zaccur, the son of Mattaniah: for they were counted faithful, and their office was to distribute unto their brethren. 14 Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for the offices thereof.” (Nehemiah 13:6-14 KJV)*

Speaking about storehouses and treasuries, we have already studied earlier in the book that the method of collecting tithes and offerings in the past and present, the record of the proceeds, their organization and allocation for various purposes, reflect the maturity of the church and the attitude of the people who are in charge of serving the Lord in the church.

There are churches, especially independent churches, that spend all their money without keeping any reserve for a rainy day. They don't have the mind of saving and keep aside for the future needs and for the emergencies. They have many excuses and reasons to strip the church treasury of its finances. Usually, these churches are shallow in stewardship and that reflects the immaturity of those who administer these churches. They are lavish at their food festivals, fellowship meetings, more flattering, more in fun, but shallow in their teaching, shepherding, and discipling of the flock. They compromise with the blemished sacrifices of the people, and they overlook people's shortcomings and instead focus on social gatherings and exorbitant parties in church. In the book of Malachi, the Lord spoke the following about those priests who loved throwing lavish parties emptying the storehouses of God. *“1 And now, O ye priests, this commandment is for you. 2 If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the LORD of hosts, I will even send a curse*

***upon you, and I will curse your blessings: yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart. 3 Behold, I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts; and one shall take you away with it.” (Malachi 2:1-3 KJV)***

They have empty houses instead of storehouses. They are in debt, paying loans; their finances reflect no grace of God in their lives. That is why God said that He will spread the dung of their solemn feasts on their faces. Such churches spend all that they have collected on food and their members are assured that if they offer tithes and offerings, then the church will cater to their plate after every service. All the money collected in the name of God is ultimately eliminated as excrement. That is why God said to the leaders of such churches, ***“Behold, I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts; and one shall take you away with it.” (Malachi 2:3 KJV)***

Mature churches have storehouses, immature churches have empty houses and empty pockets.

If I hear from a church that their account of money is almost bankrupt and nothing is left for the future, to me, it is not a coincidence. It is an iceberg that should not be overlooked, an emergency that needs to be investigated, for much work needs to be done for that church.

The church should be aware that the way the church leaders set the example to spend their finances will be the pattern adopted by their members. Financial mismanagement is sin equal to the sin of adultery and will result in destruction. Financial mismanagement leads to poverty and poverty lead to:

- Generational curse of poverty
- Slavery
- Low socio-economic condition
- Bad housing and poor accommodation
- Famine and starvation
- Sickesses and lack of medical care

- Lack of education and the inability to finish schooling and colleges
- Borrowing, inability to pay loans, dishonesty, stealing and cheating
- Immoralities and prostitution
- Broken families, separation, divorce, remarriage

The Bible tells us that the early church that was under the apostles received funds from the believers to support the various needs. ***“44 And all that believed were together, and had all things common; 45 And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.” (Acts 2:44-45 KJV)*** ***“34 Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, 35 And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.” (Acts 4:34-35 KJV)*** Now we know also from Acts 8 that the church underwent severe persecution. ***“And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.” (Acts 8:1 KJV)*** And later on in Acts 11 we can read the following event: ***“27 And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. 28 And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. 29 Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: 30 Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.” (Acts 11:27- 30 KJV)*** Now based on the prophecy of Agabus, the disciples in the church of Antioch felt the responsibility toward their brethren in Judaea, and every one according to his ability contributed to help and provide relief to the brethren. It is very good to have such a concern towards one another. It is also good that all the churches and the congregations would have financial concern toward their mother church. The apostles in Jerusalem and the brethren in Judaea hadn't requested for help but the Gentile churches were quickened by the Holy Spirit to send them help on hearing the prophecy of Agabus. Now the question to be raised here is this: Did

the church in Jerusalem and the apostles of Jesus who were leading the church have storehouses? Now I know that some who read this may say that the apostles lived by faith on God, the Provider. It is true that God will provide. But God will provide through what He promised in His Word. Almost all the churches believe in tithing according to *Malachi 3:10* “**10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.**” Now if we apply Malachi 3:10, then we need to bring the whole collection of tithes into the storehouses and not put them into our pockets or tummies. So if we collect tithes according to Malachi 3:10, then we need to abide by the principle pertaining to God’s storehouses. What we collect of tithes, offerings, firstfruits, vows, and gifts should go and stay in the storehouse and not be immediately fly away. The principle of storehouses entails us to be systematic, organized, and well disciplined pertaining to finances. No doubt the Lord will provide for us and for His church miraculously but we should not ignore and put aside the principles of stewardship and thrifty living mentioned in God’s Word.

Now regarding the church in Jerusalem and the brethren in Judaea, they might have had storehouses and hence were not in need, but if we search the Scripture we can see that apostle Paul in a few places in the Scripture was burdened to collect help and send to the saints in Jerusalem. This gives the impression that they were not well prepared to meet emergency situations concerning money. The following are the verses of Scripture that show that the saints in Jerusalem had received help from the Gentile churches.

**1. “24 Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company. 25 But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. 26 For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. 27 It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things. 28 When therefore I have**



*performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain.” (Romans 15:24-28 KJV)*

*2. “1 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. 2 Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. 3 And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem. 4 And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me.”(1 Corinthians 16:1-4 KJV)*

*3. “1 Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; 2 How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. 3 For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; 4 Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.”(2 Corinthians 8:1-4 KJV)*

*4. “1 For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you: 2 For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many. 3 Yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, ye may be ready: 4 Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting.” (2 Corinthians 9:1-4 KJV)*

Now let us read again and examine the way of giving in the church of Antioch: *“27 And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. 28 And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. 29 Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: 30 Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.” (Acts 11:27- 30 KJV)* When the need was raised up, we can see

that the church did not have money in store to give immediately but, ***“The disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea.”*** (Acts 11:29 KJV) Many churches who have no storehouses can easily be identified in the way they handle emergency situations for finances. You can see them passing a collection basket during the church service and collecting special offerings to support a mission or to help brethren who are in need or in trouble. Now the church in Antioch was newly planted and had not yet reached the level of maturity to keep a storehouse for finances during an emergency. Paul probably learned a lesson on that occasion, that it was not good to collect money last minute. He recognized the importance of collecting finances and keeping them aside and storing them for the day of need. He instructed that to the Corinthian church: ***“1 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. 2 Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. 3 And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem. 4 And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me.”***(1 Corinthians 16:1-4 KJV) So here Paul prepared the church to be ready with their collection ahead of time, to give to the saints. Every week they collected and kept aside so that when the time for his visit arrived, there would be no need to gather for the special offering because the money would be readily available. Apostle Paul further sent Titus and another brother ahead of him to prepare the Corinthian church so that when he reached them their alms collections are ready. ***“16 But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you. 17 For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you. 18 And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches.”*** (2 Corinthians 8:16-18 KJV) ***“1 For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you: 2 For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many. 3 Yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, ye may be ready: 4 Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in***

*this same confident boasting. 5 Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness.” (2 Corinthians 9:1-6 KJV)* Mature churches with mature leadership exercise wisdom in spending and setting aside as well as storing extra finances. Also, we find such churches are not in any state of panic in times of emergency. Such churches will always be prepared for any contingency and will be lenders rather than borrowers. Such churches will not call people to ask donations but will open their storehouses which are full and satisfy the needs.

The wise virgins were ready with their lamps and with extra supply of oil while the foolish virgins ran out of stock and were in dire straits: *“1 Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. 2 And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. 3 They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: 4 But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. 5 While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. 6 And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. 7 Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. 8 And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. 9 But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. 10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. 11 Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. 12 But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.” (Matthew 25:1-12 KJV)* Notice that the wise were prepared for the moment. They had storehouses. They had an extra supply of oil to meet their needs. They were really wise for they didn't cater to the request of the foolish virgins. The foolish virgins were casual in their approach and didn't prepare themselves, and when the hour approached, they were panic-stricken and totally unprepared and lost the opportunity of their lifetime. Wise churches are always in a state of preparedness while foolish churches are complacent and lazy, splurging on food and functions, spending the last penny without ever gathering or storing to meet the need of the hour.

Attitude is contagious, just like the common cold. Churches that practice the principles of good stewardship in financial matters will set the trend for their members to follow and thrive, whereas churches that do not practice the art of saving in storehouses, will lead their members astray with their bad example.

Is it not a wonderful thing that we as a church grow in maturity and are organized and ready to deal with various emergency situations in response to God's call and do immediately what is in His heart? Therefore, we need to emphasize the point that in church administration and in family management, finances must be well organized and handled.

In our church, we have storehouses of finances allotted and categorized for various purposes-for the poor and needy, for the mission work and also as savings that can be used for any emergency. There is a certain percentage in the church budget allotted for these categories, and whatever remains in each of these categories accumulates and piled up over the previous months and years. We don't say 'What we will do with this money?' But we say, 'It is in the storehouse and it will be kept for God and for certain needs in HIS heart.' We teach and encourage our disciples and members to budget their finances and have savings that can be used when the need arises so that the Lord would be glorified and the calling of the Lord could be fulfilled. Empty barns, churches in debt, members with loans and in debt are disgraceful things that will not glorify God, and we as churches should not allow such shameful things to prevail neither in our congregations nor in the lives of our families and church members.

This is what God had promised for those who obeyed Him:

- A. ***“10 And ye shall eat old store, and bring forth the old because of the new.” (Leviticus 26:10 KJV)***
- B. ***“18 Wherefore ye shall do my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them; and ye shall dwell in the land in safety. 19 And the land shall yield her fruit, and ye shall eat your fill, and dwell therein in safety. 20 And if ye shall say, What shall we eat the seventh year? behold, we shall not sow,***

*nor gather in our increase: 21 Then I will command my blessing upon you in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth fruit for three years. 22 And ye shall sow the eighth year, and eat yet of old fruit until the ninth year; until her fruits come in ye shall eat of the old store.” (Leviticus 25:18-22 KJV)*

We will have storehouses and live in plenty as we abide in doing His Word and in living in the center of His will.

# Chapter Nine:

## *Moses Versus Aaron*

***“And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses, and he said, Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee: and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart.” (Exodus 4:14 KJV)***

God had placed Aaron with Moses to help him in his ministry to lead the Israelites. But the character and the attitude of Aaron to lead the Israelites in the absence of Moses shows us how dangerous he proved to be in misleading the Israelites and in squandering their resources and using them for wrong purposes.

In the account of the golden calf that Aaron had made for the Israelites, we can observe the difference between the attitude of Moses and Aaron. Moses was willing to suffer for God while Aaron was tempted to stay in the comfort zone. There will be people whom God had placed beside us to help us and we need to discern how they are as stewards. Wrong stewardship and wrong attitude in leadership can bring much harm. Team leadership patterned after that of Moses and Aaron is the same leadership we see in many churches and Christian homes today, where one can be spiritually weaker than the other.

Moses persevered in admonishing Aaron till he was changed and finally Aaron repented and joined Moses and was willing to face the people and suffer for God.

To understand how having two leaders with opposite approaches and influences can hinder the fulfillment of God’s plan for His people, let us read the following Scriptures:

***“7 Remember, and forget not, how thou provokedst the LORD thy God to wrath in the wilderness: from the day that thou didst depart out of the land of Egypt, until ye came unto this place, ye have been rebellious against the LORD. 8 Also in Horeb ye provoked***

*the LORD to wrath, so that the LORD was angry with you to have destroyed you. 9 When I was gone up into the mount to receive the tables of stone, even the tables of the covenant which the LORD made with you, then I abode in the mount forty days and forty nights, I neither did eat bread nor drink water: 10 And the LORD delivered unto me two tables of stone written with the finger of God; and on them was written according to all the words, which the LORD spake with you in the mount out of the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly. 11 And it came to pass at the end of forty days and forty nights, that the LORD gave me the two tables of stone, even the tables of the covenant. 12 And the LORD said unto me, Arise, get thee down quickly from hence; for thy people which thou hast brought forth out of Egypt have corrupted themselves; they are quickly turned aside out of the way which I commanded them; they have made them a molten image. 13 Furthermore the LORD spake unto me, saying, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people: 14 Let me alone, that I may destroy them, and blot out their name from under heaven: and I will make of thee a nation mightier and greater than they. 15 So I turned and came down from the mount, and the mount burned with fire: and the two tables of the covenant were in my two hands. 16 And I looked, and, behold, ye had sinned against the LORD your God, and had made you a molten calf: ye had turned aside quickly out of the way which the LORD had commanded you. 17 And I took the two tables, and cast them out of my two hands, and brake them before your eyes. 18 And I fell down before the LORD, as at the first, forty days and forty nights: I did neither eat bread, nor drink water, because of all your sins which ye sinned, in doing wickedly in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger. 19 For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure, wherewith the LORD was wroth against you to destroy you. But the LORD hearkened unto me at that time also. 20 And the LORD was very angry with Aaron to have destroyed him: and I prayed for Aaron also the same time. 21 And I took your sin, the calf which ye had made, and burnt it with fire, and stamped it, and ground it very small, even until it was as small as dust: and I cast the dust thereof into the brook that descended out of the mount.” (Deuteronomy 9:7-21 KJV)*

*“1 And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. 2 And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me. 3 And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron. 4 And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. 5 And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, To morrow is a feast to the LORD. 6 And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play. 7 And the LORD said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves: 8 They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. 9 And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people: 10 Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation. 11 And Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, LORD, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? 12 Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. 13 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever. 14 And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people. 15 And Moses turned, and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand: the*



tables were written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other were they written. 16 And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables. 17 And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses, There is a noise of war in the camp. 18 And he said, It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome: but the noise of them that sing do I hear. 19 And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing; and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount. 20 And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strawed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it. 21 And Moses said unto Aaron, What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them? 22 And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my lord wax hot: thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief. 23 For they said unto me, Make us gods, which shall go before us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. 24 And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf. 25 And when Moses saw that the people were naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies:) 26 Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the LORD's side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him. 27 And he said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour. 28 And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men. 29 For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves today to the LORD, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother; that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day. 30 And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the LORD; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin. 31 And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. 32 Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin--;

*and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written. 33 And the LORD said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book. 34 Therefore now go, lead the people unto the place of which I have spoken unto thee: behold, mine Angel shall go before thee: nevertheless in the day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them. 35 And the LORD plagued the people, because they made the calf, which Aaron made.” (Exodus 32:1-35 KJV)*

1. Moses calmed the Lord’s anger and prayed and interceded so that the Lord would forgive the people, while Aaron ignited the Lord’s anger. Many provoke the anger of God by taking people’s side.

2. Moses fasted for forty days on two occasions and received the Word of God “*the two tables of the testimony.*” Aaron preferred to feast with the people and received nothing. Many ministers say they don’t know what to teach and aren’t able to receive the Word of God. How can they hear when they don’t want to fast and spend time in God’s presence? They will be in a famine of God’s Word. Such ministers preach according to people’s wishes, diluting the Word of God. Ultimately, they will drive the members to succumb ‘to the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life’.

3. Moses edified the people by disciplining them with God’s Word and causing them to walk according to His will and finally turned them back to God while Aaron corrupted and spoiled the people by compromising with God’s Word.

4. Moses prayed and God listened to him. Aaron offered many burnt and peace offerings to God but there was no communication between him and God who detested his evil ways. He spent much on that occasion when the people made the golden calf and indulged in pagan rituals and revelry which was against the will of God. It was initiated by the people and not by God. Many churches have huge programs initiated by the people and with each program, many resources are spent resulting in more churches, families, and members ending in poverty, loans, and debts. There is one more thing worthy to be mentioned in the colossal damage caused by Aaron. People who got involved in these functions thought that what they had spent on this

occasion as burnt and peace offerings would return to them as blessings. But the fact was that God's wrath was ignited against them. Therefore, we should not be deceived with such kind of church ministers and go along with them.

5. Moses loved Aaron and fasted for him to be restored when he sinned, while Aaron betrayed Moses in taking the side of people who had disobeyed the Word of God. Moses appreciated Aaron and worked tirelessly to restore him. Aaron never thought of protecting Moses and it was easy for him to betray the ministry of God.

6. Moses focused on God and directed the people and instructed them to what God wanted them to do while Aaron was directed by the people and they instructed him what to do. We should lead the people and instruct them with God's commands and help them to continue to follow God.

7. Moses protected the people's resources and used them to build the Ark of the Covenant. *"4 And Moses spake unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying, This is the thing which the LORD commanded, saying, 5 Take ye from among you an offering unto the LORD: whosoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it, an offering of the LORD; gold, and silver, and brass, 6 And blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair, 7 And rams' skins dyed red, and badgers' skins, and shittim wood, 8 And oil for the light, and spices for anointing oil, and for the sweet incense, 9 And onyx stones, and stones to be set for the ephod, and for the breastplate. 10 And every wise hearted among you shall come, and make all that the LORD hath commanded; 11 The tabernacle, his tent, and his covering, his taches, and his boards, his bars, his pillars, and his sockets, 12 The ark, and the staves thereof, with the mercy seat, and the vail of the covering, 13 The table, and his staves, and all his vessels, and the shewbread, 14 The candlestick also for the light, and his furniture, and his lamps, with the oil for the light, 15 And the incense altar, and his staves, and the anointing oil, and the sweet incense, and the hanging for the door at the entering in of the tabernacle, 16 The altar of burnt offering, with his brasen grate, his staves, and all his vessels, the laver and his foot, 17 The hangings of the court, his pillars, and their sockets, and the hanging for the*

*door of the court, 18 The pins of the tabernacle, and the pins of the court, and their cords, 19 The cloths of service, to do service in the holy place, the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons, to minister in the priest's office. 20 And all the congregation of the children of Israel departed from the presence of Moses. 21 And they came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing, and they brought the LORD's offering to the work of the tabernacle of the congregation, and for all his service, and for the holy garments. 22 And they came, both men and women, as many as were willing hearted, and brought bracelets, and earrings, and rings, and tablets, all jewels of gold: and every man that offered offered an offering of gold unto the LORD. 23 And every man, with whom was found blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair, and red skins of rams, and badgers' skins, brought them. 24 Every one that did offer an offering of silver and brass brought the LORD's offering: and every man, with whom was found shittim wood for any work of the service, brought it. 25 And all the women that were wise hearted did spin with their hands, and brought that which they had spun, both of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, and of fine linen. 26 And all the women whose heart stirred them up in wisdom spun goats' hair. 27 And the rulers brought onyx stones, and stones to be set, for the ephod, and for the breastplate; 28 And spice, and oil for the light, and for the anointing oil, and for the sweet incense. 29 The children of Israel brought a willing offering unto the LORD, every man and woman, whose heart made them willing to bring for all manner of work, which the LORD had commanded to be made by the hand of Moses."*

*(Exodus 35:4-29 KJV)* The people used precious resources that God had given them to honor Him and serve Him. If we look into the Scripture, we can see there is a long list of materials that the people offered to God. The Lord is always gracious to His people and lavishes on them his great riches. When they know how to keep and use appropriately the riches of God, then you will find them ready to do as well as contribute to the work of God. Aaron wasted the people's resources and used them to do evil and promoted harmful things. Ministers like Aaron who are weak will lose many resources and when the time comes to do the work of God, their churches and their people won't be able to.

8. Moses molded the people into the frame that God's Word expected. He conformed to the pattern of God's Word while Aaron twisted the Word of God to suit the people's wishes and desires. After he made the calf he said, ***"To morrow is a feast to the LORD."*** (*Exodus 32:5 KJV*)

Many are conformed to the pattern of this world and use the ministry to host parties, festivals, music programs, indulging in a misuse of God's house for selling and buying, auctioning and engaging in filthy jokes, coarse talk, vulgar dances, immoralities, and other kinds of pagan revelry.

9. Moses' authority was from the heavenly kingdom of God and he was directed by God as to what to do while Aaron's authority was of this world and he was directed by the people.

10. Moses' style of ministry and service included saving, fasting, suffering, and struggling to do God's will while Aaron's ministry included feasting, picnics, pleasure trips, sports festivals, wasting, and engaging in revelry and pagan practices.

11. Church leaders like Moses are blessed with good savings and contribute to the real work of God, but church leaders like Aaron are perpetually in debt and have loans to settle.

12. Moses was a God pleaser while Aaron was a people pleaser.

13. Aaron caused the people to be naked, ***"And when Moses saw that the people were naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies:)"*** (*Exodus 32:25 KJV*) In churches led by people like Aaron, driven by their own wishes, we can see that even their dress code is far from what God had ordained; extravagant, worldly and vulgar, costly, and contributing to sexual immorality. On the other hand, leaders like Moses will impart to the people the fear of God, conservativeness, and decency in dress code and thriftiness.

14. Moses attracted faithful people; Joshua was with him. Around Aaron were corrupt people. Corruption will drive away good people.

15. Moses spoke the truth while Aaron when he was confronted, spoke lies about the calf he had made. ***“Then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf.” (Exodus 32:24 KJV)*** He did not say that he ***“Fashioned it with a graving tool.” (Exodus 32:4 KJV)*** Many ministers like Aaron have numerous lies tucked under their belt to justify their wrongdoings and compromises.

16. Moses led the people into the infinite truth of God’s Word as he led them towards the Promised Land. Aaron led the people into idol worship and curses.

17. Moses did what was right and stood firm in his approach. When we discipline people, we don’t need to bow down to them or feel apologetic but need to continue in our stand. People like Aaron who knows the Word of God but compromise with the people, need to repent.

18. Moses was willing to endure suffering at the cost of adhering to God’s Word when he faced the people. On the occasion when the people built the golden calf, Moses faced the people and destroyed the objects of their festivity and disrupted the whole celebration. In the case of Aaron, he was not willing to suffer and instead of admonishing the people of their sins, joined them in their sin and celebration.

19. Moses knew the consequences and the destructive effects of sin on the people. He burnt the idol, ground it to powder, scattered it on the water and made the people drink it. Leaders like Moses explain and expound well to the people the bad effects of their sins. Aaron was not able to see the destructive effect of sin on people’s lives. Such kind of leaders as Aaron is weak and not much discerning and need to be under the supervision of leaders like Moses.

20. When Moses announced, ***“Who is on the LORD's side? let him come unto me.” (Exodus 32:26 KJV)*** he was willing to lose some of the people to save the rest and to lay down a true foundation. It was indeed a challenging situation and he had to make the decision. Moses chose the Word of God that is sharper than the double-edged sword to cut the ties of sin, flesh, culture, and tradition while Aaron used festivities to attract people’s favor and approval.

21. Moses had true love for God's ministry and bore much fruit. He was able to bring the people back to God and to raise up a body of committed workers, the Levites along with other people, who accepted God's Word and discipline. Moses trained them to serve God and do His work.

We need to help the people under our care and love them as Moses did so that they can rid themselves of idolatry, get saved and use their lives and resources for the extension of God's kingdom on earth.

One of the most important fruits of Moses' ministry is winning Aaron for God. Moses persevered in admonishing Aaron till he was changed and finally repented and was willing to serve God wholeheartedly.

God had called Aaron to be with Moses, and he was a blessing to Moses and a good helpmate in the ministry. He conveyed the message of God, taking from Moses and passing it to the Israelites and he performed all the signs in the sight of the people as God had wanted him to. ***"27 And the LORD said to Aaron, Go into the wilderness to meet Moses. And he went, and met him in the mount of God, and kissed him. 28 And Moses told Aaron all the words of the LORD who had sent him, and all the signs which he had commanded him. 29 And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel: 30 And Aaron spake all the words which the LORD had spoken unto Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people. 31 And the people believed: and when they heard that the LORD had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped."*** (Exodus 4:27-31 KJV) So we really need to help those people whom God has placed beside us. They might go astray when they are pressurized by people, but we need to forgive them and do all that we can to correct them in order for them to be restored.

Finally, Aaron adopted the method of Moses and responded well to God's call. We need to do the same. We need to recognize parents or leaders who are like Aaron, confront them in order for them to have the opportunity to repent and get saved. We will bear fruit in these areas in our family life and in our ministry. We will see them changed

and transformed and they will walk once again in the ways of God and they will be of great help to us as good stewards. This is the calling that has been placed on our lives to lead others to be in the perfect will of God.



# Chapter 10

## *Food*

Food and water are needed for the physical well being of our bodies. We need to eat food so that we can go forward to live our lives for God and to serve Him. The fuel for our physical body is the physical food that we need to eat to receive calories. Therefore, food is important for a healthy life in order to achieve God's purpose in our lives. But we don't live to eat, but eat to live.

Why is it important to include the topic of food in this book? Many spend recklessly on food to satiate their palate. The Scripture speaks about poverty visiting those who love to spend much on certain food rich in oil. ***“He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man: he that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich.” (Proverbs 21:17 KJV)***

As we review the Scripture below, we can see that the Lord supplied His people with food in order for them to gain strength to do His work.

***1. “33 And while the day was coming on, Paul besought them all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried and continued fasting, having taken nothing. 34 Wherefore I pray you to take some meat: for this is for your health: for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you. 35 And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all: and when he had broken it, he began to eat. 36 Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took some meat. 37 And we were in all in the ship two hundred threescore and sixteen souls. 38 And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, and cast out the wheat into the sea.” (Acts 27:33-38 KJV)*** Food that was given to the passengers on board had strengthened their bodies; therefore they were able to, ***“lightened the ship, and cast out the wheat into the sea.” (Acts 27:38 KJV)*** Here Paul mentioned to the people on board, ***“Wherefore I pray you to take some meat: for this is for your health: for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you.” (Acts 27:34 KJV)*** So food is important for survival and strength. After

fourteen days without food, they took their first meal. It was bread, which was simple, but nutritional in value and healthy to the body. That bread hadn't been baked recently. It was old bread because for fourteen days they were passing through a terrible wind in the middle of a raging sea. These days very few opt for old bread. The excuses would be that it is spoilt or the date has expired or it is moldy. But for the passengers in the ship, the same old bread had been used by God to give strength to the passengers to move on to the next stage of their lives. My point is not that we eat old food or spoiled food. The point here is that natural food carries a lot of nutritional value to strengthen our bodies to live so that we can continue to live our lives for God. It is not the other things that are important like its taste or its freshness or its look.

So when I need to purchase my food to eat I look at its nutritional value. That will help me to buy nutritional food at a low cost. I don't need to buy expensive bread, vegetables, or meat. I can still buy the less expensive brand of bread, vegetables, and meat and still receive the same nutritional value of food. This is a good point for stewardship; we can save money that can be used for other noble purposes.

***2. "1 And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word. 2 And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, 3 Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. 4 And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there. 5 So he went and did according unto the word of the LORD: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. 6 And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook." (1 Kings 17:1-6 KJV)*** The ravens brought the food to Elijah, the man of God. They have carried the bread and the meat in their mouths to Elijah and he ate them and drank water from the brook. If God did that to us today, will we be ready to eat such food? What will we tell God? Are we going to question God as to its cleanness?

Just imagine Elijah had to eat the same food morning and evening for a long time. He never questioned God. It is not mentioned that he said to the Lord, *“I don’t like the same taste, Lord!”* or *“Why like that Lord?”* For his liquid intake, he drank the water from the brook, unlike us who quench our thirst with coffee, juices, or soft drinks. Elijah was thankful to God for being his provider. God was truly concerned about Elijah’s diet and provided him with protein, fat, and carbohydrates.

The point that we need to emphasize is that it’s not the brand of food, its freshness, and its value in terms of money that is important. As long as it is nutritious, enhances our health, and enables us to serve God, it is good. Many are so particular about certain brands of food and they will spend much money on particular foods just to get the taste they like. But cheaper brands have the same nutritional value and give the same benefits to our physical bodies. We work and labor hard to earn our living and we need to direct what we earn into wise ways of spending. We need to tithe our income, spend wisely for food, accommodation, and our children’s education and raise them up in a Godly way. Besides our savings, we also set aside money for God’s work. Therefore the taste of expensive food isn’t important.

**3. *“7 And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land. 8 And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, 9 Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee. 10 So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was there gathering of sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink. 11 And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand. 12 And she said, As the LORD thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die. 13 And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son. 14 For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day***

***that the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth. 15 And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days. 16 And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Elijah.” (1 Kings 17:7-16 KJV)***

Here, Elijah was directed by God to have another source for living. God directed him to be fed by a widow. Elijah obeyed God, and therefore there was food for Elijah and for the woman and her family. Just imagine eating every day a cake of bread and no other food. How will we feel about it if the Lord will do that to us? We need to be thankful for whatever God is providing us with. Elijah did not reject the offer of God to send him to a widow to feed him. Many will pridefully refuse if God will send them to certain people to feed them since there they will be forced to eat simple food. Jesus mentioned the story of Elijah in the New Testament, confirming that God was the one who had sent Elijah to that particular widow. ***“25 But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; 26 But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.” (Luke 4:25-26 KJV)*** Nowadays, a good number of people boast in their lavishness of food and spend much on it when they are sent to the mission field.

There are certain times that people are provided free food, but instead of eating that food they will go and buy another food because they cannot accept the taste of the food that is repeated for many days. There are certain people who work in certain companies that provide free food. They need to be thankful to God because they don't have to prepare their own food and can save time, money, and effort.

***4. “1 And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword. 2 Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to morrow about this time. 3 And when he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beersheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there. 4 But he himself went a day's journey into the***

wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers. 5 And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat. 6 And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again. 7 And the angel of the LORD came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee. 8 And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God. 9 And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah?" (1 Kings 19:1-9 KJV) God was so caring to His servant Elijah. As he fled from Jezebel who was after him to kill him, God showed concern by providing for him the right food, to strengthen his body for the long journey that was ahead of him. "And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God." (1 Kings 19:8 KJV) That was God's provision for him to take and eat. The angel of the Lord woke him up twice to eat and drink to be strengthened to go and continue His journey with the purpose of serving God. The Lord did not give him extravagant or exotic food but simple food to sustain him. It is not important that we are provided with the best quality food, for even simple and less costly food can do much in our mission. What is more important is that we have strength in our body to fulfill our responsibility to God and the people.

5. "1 Thou also, son of man, take thee a tile, and lay it before thee, and pourtray upon it the city, even Jerusalem: 2 And lay siege against it, and build a fort against it, and cast a mount against it; set the camp also against it, and set battering rams against it round about. 3 Moreover take thou unto thee an iron pan, and set it for a wall of iron between thee and the city: and set thy face against it, and it shall be besieged, and thou shalt lay siege against it. This shall be a sign to the house of Israel. 4 Lie thou also upon thy left side, and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel upon it: according to the number of the days that thou shalt lie upon it thou shalt bear their iniquity. 5 For I have laid upon thee the years of their iniquity,

*according to the number of the days, three hundred and ninety days: so shalt thou bear the iniquity of the house of Israel. 6 And when thou hast accomplished them, lie again on thy right side, and thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days: I have appointed thee each day for a year. 7 Therefore thou shalt set thy face toward the siege of Jerusalem, and thine arm shall be uncovered, and thou shalt prophesy against it. 8 And, behold, I will lay bands upon thee, and thou shalt not turn thee from one side to another, till thou hast ended the days of thy siege. 9 Take thou also unto thee wheat, and barley, and beans, and lentiles, and millet, and fitches, and put them in one vessel, and make thee bread thereof, according to the number of the days that thou shalt lie upon thy side, three hundred and ninety days shalt thou eat thereof. 10 And thy meat which thou shalt eat shall be by weight, twenty shekels a day: from time to time shalt thou eat it. 11 Thou shalt drink also water by measure, the sixth part of an hin: from time to time shalt thou drink. 12 And thou shalt eat it as barley cakes, and thou shalt bake it with dung that cometh out of man, in their sight. 13 And the LORD said, Even thus shall the children of Israel eat their defiled bread among the Gentiles, whither I will drive them. 14 Then said I, Ah Lord GOD! behold, my soul hath not been polluted: for from my youth up even till now have I not eaten of that which dieth of itself, or is torn in pieces; neither came there abominable flesh into my mouth. 15 Then he said unto me, Lo, I have given thee cow's dung for man's dung, and thou shalt prepare thy bread therewith. 16 Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, behold, I will break the staff of bread in Jerusalem: and they shall eat bread by weight, and with care; and they shall drink water by measure, and with astonishment: 17 That they may want bread and water, and be astonished one with another, and consume away for their iniquity.”*

*(Ezekiel 4:1-17 KJV)* This is a real incident and not just a fable. Ezekiel was asked by God to lie on his side 390 days and then on the other side 40 days, and he was asked to prepare very simple food from grains. The food and drink were rationed by weight and the amount was less than the intake of a normal man. He was asked by God to eat 20 shekels per day which is equal to 228.4 grams, and he was asked to drink one-sixth of a hin which is equal to 611 milliliters. The prophet obeyed the Word of God; he obeyed to be restricted in movement, he obeyed the method that God instructed to prepare his food and he

obeyed to eat and drink the certain amounts that God described. I am not telling that we need to eat and drink less but we need to be sensitive to the pattern of life that God would like us to live. What is the point in indulging in gluttony? Live and eat based on the pattern of life that God would like us to live. Ezekiel could have lived and eaten better, but he abided by the instruction of God so that he could convey the message of God in a clearer way.

God requested Ezekiel to bake his food, ***“Then he said unto me, Lo, I have given thee cow's dung for man's dung, and thou shalt prepare thy bread therewith” (Ezekiel 4:15 KJV)*** Nowadays, people are so satisfied with readymade food from restaurants which cost a fortune. They would rather drive to Pizza Hut, KFC, Burger King, and such places without thinking how much it would cost them. We need to cook and bake our food at home rather than eat processed food. It is sheer laziness, worldliness, and carelessness if we opt for readymade food. Imagine people are sitting at home and they have all the facilities for cooking but still they will order sweets and junk food just for the sake of the special taste. I can't say either that they don't have time. They are just lazy. The homemade sweets and food are also especially tasty to those who are trained to cook and eat at their homes and who had committed themselves to be good stewards in God's sight.

Since some people are working, they feel they have the right to enjoy life by eating outside without going through the ordeal of cooking. But, if we live this way, then what are we teaching the people around us and the people under our care and our families and children? They will learn from us how to squander and live in debauchery, the same way the prodigal son lived and wasted the resources of his father. ***“12 And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. 13 And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.” (Luke 15:12-13 KJV)***

Those who live thriftily will pass a clear message to the people around them about the importance of stewardship and the need to preserve our resources so that we can invest into God's work.

6. *“And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.” (Matthew 3:4 KJV)* John ate locust and honey everyday and he was happy to serve God and preach His Word and admonish the people to follow God. The food that God had given him was enough to sustain his body for His service. That food was free and available to him so he used it to his benefit. Sure God is providing similar resources for us but do we thank God and humble ourselves before Him and eat what he has given us without grumbling?

7. *“1 And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz. 2 And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter. 3 And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech. 4 And, behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, The LORD be with you. And they answered him, The LORD bless thee. 5 Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this? 6 And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab: 7 And she said, I pray you, let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves: so she came, and hath continued even from the morning until now, that she tarried a little in the house. 8 Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearst thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens: 9 Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? and when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn. 10 Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger? 11 And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore.*



*12 The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust. 13 Then she said, Let me find favour in thy sight, my lord; for that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken friendly unto thine handmaid, though I be not like unto one of thine handmaidens. 14 And Boaz said unto her, At mealtime come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers: and he reached her parched corn, and she did eat, and was sufficed, and left. 15 And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not: 16 And let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not. 17 So she gleaned in the field until even, and beat out that she had gleaned: and it was about an ephah of barley. 18 And she took it up, and went into the city: and her mother in law saw what she had gleaned: and she brought forth, and gave to her that she had reserved after she was sufficed.”(Ruth 2:1-18 KJV)* Ruth decided to work in order to provide food for herself and for her mother-in-law. She decided and was willing to glean after the harvesters and to pick the leftovers that was allocated by God for the poor. She knew where to find her food based on God’s Word. *“9 And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest. 10 And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I am the LORD your God.” (Leviticus 19:9-10 KJV)* *“And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not make clean riddance of the corners of thy field when thou reapest, neither shalt thou gather any gleanings of thy harvest: thou shalt leave them unto the poor, and to the stranger: I am the LORD your God.” (Leviticus 23:22 KJV)* *“When thou gatherest the grapes of thy vineyard, thou shalt not glean it afterward: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow.” (Deuteronomy 24:21 KJV)* What was allocated to her and to her mother-in-law as the portion of food was to be collected by gleaning after the harvesters.

The Lord led her to the right farm to glean and she worked hard from morning till evening, every day in the same place, on the farm of Boaz. *“So she kept fast by the maidens of Boaz to glean unto the end of*

*barley harvest and of wheat harvest; and dwelt with her mother in law.” (Ruth 2:23 KJV)* We can see in the passage below what kind of food she ate during her lunch break. *“And Boaz said unto her, At mealtime come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers: and he reached her parched corn, and she did eat, and was sufficed, and left.” (Ruth 2:14 KJV)* Her food was bread, vinegar, and corn, and her drink, plain water. *“And when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn.” (Ruth 2:9 KJV)* When she ate her fill, she had food left over that which she brought back for Naomi, her mother-in-law. *“And she took it up, and went into the city: and her mother in law saw what she had gleaned: and she brought forth, and gave to her that she had reserved after she was sufficed.”(Ruth 2:18 KJV)* Ruth reserved the leftover food and gave it to Naomi because she believed that was God’s provision for her mother-in-law. The meaning of Naomi is blessed and it is blessed to eat the leftover and learn how to save and become a good steward. Those who preserve the leftover food are wise people. In doing so, they provide food for another mouth.

*Those who are good on keeping the leftovers are good at saving.*

*But*

*Those who are good at throwing the leftovers are poor at saving.*

All the characters in the Bible mentioned above, accepted not only the food God had given them but also God’s plan and will for their lives. The same should be in our case. We must resign ourselves to God’s provision, will, and plan with thanksgiving in our heart and serve Him. It is better we humble ourselves before God before He humbles us. Let us ask God forgiveness for all our sins especially our grumbling against food and against His good plans for us. Instead of grumbling, let us ask God to give us patience, self-control, and perseverance to accept the discipline that He has meted out to us and endure it so that His plan in our lives will be fulfilled.

**8. In Exodus 16,** (please read pages 65-68) God provided manna for His people in the desert after He had brought them out of Egypt. Manna was nutritious food provided to sustain them. Some baked it and some boiled but they ate it daily in the desert for forty years.

When the Israelites in the wilderness asked God to give them food and meat in the wilderness they had their own cattle with them, but they were not allowed to slaughter their animals to eat for their cattle were reserved to be offered to God. ***“24 And Pharaoh called unto Moses, and said, Go ye, serve the LORD; only let your flocks and your herds be stayed: let your little ones also go with you. 25 And Moses said, Thou must give us also sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice unto the LORD our God. 26 Our cattle also shall go with us; there shall not an hoof be left behind; for thereof must we take to serve the LORD our God; and we know not with what we must serve the LORD, until we come thither.”*** (Exodus 10:24-26 KJV) Now here, in the same way, we cannot squander our finances on extravagant food at the cost of offering our tithes, firstfruits, offerings, and vows. Before the Israelites left Egypt, they ate the Passover lamb, and after they departed from Egypt, they did not slaughter any of their animals until they were at Mount Sinai. ***“1 And he said unto Moses, Come up unto the LORD, thou, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and worship ye afar off. 2 And Moses alone shall come near the LORD: but they shall not come nigh; neither shall the people go up with him. 3 And Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the LORD hath said will we do. 4 And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. 5 And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the LORD. 6 And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basons; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. 7 And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient. 8 And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words.”*** (Exodus 24:1-8 KJV)

The Israelites needed to set aside the meat of the cattle that they had and wait for the mercy of God to send them quail. ***“And it came to pass, that at even the quails came up, and covered the camp: and in***

***the morning the dew lay round about the host.” (Exodus 16:13 KJV)***

The daily food of the Israelites was manna and water. God gave the people quail as a rare exception. Even when the seventy elders, Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu went up the mountain to see the Lord, they ate manna and drank water. Even though they were the leaders of the church, no special food was prepared for them. ***“9 Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel: 10 And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness. 11 And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink.” (Exodus 24:9-11 KJV)***

The Israelites were called to exercise self-control and patience and survive on manna and water and occasionally received quail meat.

They needed to collect manna from the bare ground covered in dust and eat it. They had to accept this from God. ***“14 And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground. 15 And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat. 16 This is the thing which the LORD hath commanded, Gather of it every man according to his eating, an omer for every man, according to the number of your persons; take ye every man for them which are in his tents.” (Exodus 16:14-16 KJV)*** Who among us is today willing to pick up his food from the ground? God made them collect their food from the ground to force them to humble down and break their pride. Many will refuse to take up a low profile job just because they cannot bear what the people would speak about them. I knew a family man who had no job and was in need. After a while, he found a job but refused to take it up. The job was in a restaurant and he needed to drive around to deliver food to the customers. He shared with his wife that he found it embarrassing and degrading to deliver food at people’s doorstep especially at his friends’. His wife tried to make him see reason by telling him that it was better to deliver food than ring someone’s bell to borrow money.

The manna was God's plan and provision for His people in the desert with an occasional provision of quail. ***"And it came to pass, that at even the quails came up, and covered the camp: and in the morning the dew lay round about the host."*** (Exodus 16:13 KJV) But there were among them those who were grumbling against God because of the manna: ***"4 And the mixt multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? 5 We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick: 6 But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes."*** (Numbers 11:4-6 KJV) When they insisted on eating what they liked, the Lord gave them the meat, but that was never God's will for them. Therefore, after He gave them the meat, He struck them with a severe plague. ***"33 And while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of the LORD was kindled against the people, and the LORD smote the people with a very great plague. 34 And he called the name of that place Kibrothhattaavah: because there they buried the people that lusted."*** (Numbers 11:33-34 KJV) We should not belittle, grumble, and complain about whatever God gives us as food because we don't like its taste. We should refrain from speaking against God and against the people who lead us and teach us not to gorge ourselves on food and waste our resources. We need to be careful not to behave in such a way for God will discipline us for that. God has provided the most nutritious and wholesome food for mankind but some people invite trouble by gorging themselves on fatty food and finding themselves on the hospital bed, seeking treatment and cure for illnesses like hypertension, high cholesterol, heart diseases, diabetes, gout, obesity, stroke, and other fatal sickness that may lead to early death.

After the people entered the Promised Land, ***"And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year."*** (Joshua 5:12 KJV) God had made all the necessary arrangements for their food. In the desert, He had given them manna for forty years and after they entered Canaan, they ate the fruit of the land. In the same way, God has arranged for us the right food which He provides on time.

Jesus spoke about the manna when the people asked Him to give them a miraculous sign. ***“30 They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work? 31 Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. 32 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.”*** (John 6:30-32 KJV) Manna was given by God to the Israelites to sustain their bodies in the desert till they reached the Promised Land. It was a sign from God to His people. They might not have been very happy with it at the beginning, but later on, they considered it as a sign of God’s love for them. Therefore, the focus should not be on the physical food. Even simple food can sustain our bodies in order to serve God and live our lives for Him till we reach eternity. Jesus also said, ***“Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.”*** (John 6:27 KJV) Whatever God provides us as food is a miraculous sign from God to sustain our physical bodies in order for us to live fruitfully on earth till He comes and takes us to Heaven.

***9. “19 What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing? 20 But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. 21 Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils. 22 Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?”*** (1 Corinthians 10:19-22 KJV) Food sacrificed to idols is a common practice in many parts of the world. People indulge in pagan worship and revelry directed toward idols. We might be invited to partake of the food offered to demons.

In my experience in reaching people of different nations and in teaching several of the church congregations, one of the topics that I usually teach on, is food sacrificed to idols. Most of those I teach are enticed to accept the invitation of the non-believers just for the sake of wetting their appetite for free food. Many give the reason that it is

expensive, strenuous, and time-consuming to prepare food at home and so invitations from people on feast days are always welcome. Moreover, it provides an opportunity to feed on a delectable choice of food which is otherwise unaffordable. Now the idea to get free and delicious food from these unholy sources is sinful and is against God. It is a fellowship with demons and in addition to that, the believers who go to such places are compromising with other false religions like Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Baha'ism, Catholicism, and so on. Those who repeatedly go along with such people are indirectly agreeing with their false religions and in this way show their solidarity with false gods. They do not stand by the truth of God's Word. Such kind of fellowships will lead the believers into worldliness, and they will receive wrong input from the non believers and ultimately end in taking wrong decisions and moving away from God. This will certainly ignite God's anger because our God is a jealous God and He will punish us if we like harlots have fellowship with non-believers and gorge ourselves with their free food.

The food sacrificed to idols includes food that comes from wrong sources. For example, food that is offered by a man to a woman to entice her and have a relationship with her is also food sacrificed to idols. There are women who put themselves in a relationship with men in order to receive food and support from them and that is similar in nature to food offered to idols.

Gifts, money, food, chocolates, flowers, and other things that are given to entice people to sin and do wrong are similar to food that is sacrificed to idols and we should refrain from them.

Now, this doesn't include those believers who acquaint themselves with non-believers in order to reach out to them with the Gospel. Their intention is honorable; they don't go seeking after food or worldly pleasures, but they are out in the mission field winning souls for God. ***"27 If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake. 28 But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof."*** (1 Corinthians 10:27-28 KJV) Jesus went to many sinners

and homes of nonbelievers and His intention was not to eat, but to share and preach the Gospel as we can read in the Scriptures. *“1 Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. 2 And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.” (Luke 15:1-2 KJV) “9 And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him. 10 And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. 11 And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners? “ (Matthew 9:9-11 KJV) “36 And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat.” (Luke 7:36 KJV)* We need to move to people, not for the sake to eat or take advantage of them, but as Jesus did to preach the Gospel, declaring to them God’s Word and His Kingdom.

*10. “1 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it. 2 And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god. 3 And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes; 4 Children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans. 5 And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king. 6 Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: 7 Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel the name of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abednego. 8 But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the*



*king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. 9 Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs. 10 And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which are of your sort? then shall ye make me endanger my head to the king. 11 Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, 12 Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink. 13 Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants. 14 So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days. 15 And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat. 16 Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse. 17 As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. 18 Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. 19 And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king. 20 And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king enquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm. 21 And Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus.” (Daniel 1:1-21 KJV)*

Daniel did not defile himself with the food that was given to him from the king's table. Daniel was a young man who was brought as a captive to a foreign land governed by non-believers, away from his own people or relatives. But, he decided not to defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, or with the wine. The reason behind this was because he knew that the food would either contain unclean items that the Levitical law prohibited or it could be food sacrificed to idols or the wine served could be alcoholic in content. Daniel and his friends

were chosen much against their will to be trained for three years and then to serve the king of Babylon. They were given new names that had other meanings. The meaning of Daniel is ‘God is my judge’; the meaning of Hananiah is ‘God has favored’; the meaning of Mishael is ‘Who is what God is’; and the meaning of Azariah is ‘Jehovah has helped’. To Daniel, they gave the name ‘Belteshazzar’; the meaning of this name is ‘lord of the straitened's treasure’; to Hananiah, they gave the name ‘Shadrach’; the meaning of this name is ‘royal’ or ‘the great scribe’; to Mishael, they gave the name ‘Meshach’; the meaning of this name is ‘guest of a king’; to Azariah, they gave the name Abednego; the meaning of this name is ‘servant of Nebo’.

But inspite of all this, the Babylonians were not able to influence them and their commitment towards God. Daniel and his friends decided to keep away from all the enticing things on the king’s table. They knew it would defile them in every way. Daniel was aware that if he defiled himself with food from the king’s table, he would have to compromise on other matters too.

Food offered to idols or food offered through wicked people with the wrong motive is to weaken our faith and find a way to penetrate our lives and force us to do wrong. Such kind of food is never a blessing from God. In many ungodly relationships, food is used to strengthen the bond and compel the person to do wrong. Therefore, we need to be aware of that. The first temptation of man by the devil was in the Garden of Eden and the temptation was using food as the medium. He tempted them to eat from the tree that God had forbidden man to eat from. ***“But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” (Genesis 2:17 KJV)*** Even in the first temptation of Jesus, the devil again used food. He tempted Jesus to change the stone to bread. ***“And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.” (Matthew 4:3 KJV)*** Such kind of food that God forbids us to eat will not make us rich but it will enslave us and cause us to sin against God. Therefore, we need to be cautious and discerning and bold in refusing it as Jesus said, ***“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” (Matthew 4:4 KJV)***

***“But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.” (Daniel 1:8 KJV)*** Daniel determined in his heart to refuse such food. When he was willing to obey God, the Lord made a way for him and for his friends to escape the trap of the Devil. Daniel and his friends found favor in the eyes of Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. ***“Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse.” (Daniel 1:16 KJV)*** Those young people were willing to discipline their mouth and stomach; they were neither enticed by the food nor by its price. They were willing to stand for the truth, therefore God rewarded them. ***“As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.” (Daniel 1:17 KJV)*** Daniel and his friends treasured the wisdom of God more than food and drink. Wisdom is needed more than food, to organize our lives. Our stand against such temptations will fetch us the treasure of God’s wisdom and knowledge that surpasses the benefits of any food or drink.

We learn a lesson from Daniel. Satan may use people to give us food, gold, money, or other things. But later on, we need to put in our minds that we need to pay the price for our greed. Therefore, we need to discern the source we receive from, whether from God or from Satan. Daniel and his friends were pressurized by the power of the enemy. In the same way, Satan may use certain circumstances of our lives and try to take advantage of us or play on our emotions and egos like what he did with Daniel and his friends. The Babylonians even changed their names to make them lose their identity as true people of God. But they took the initiative to stand and their stand paved the way for others to be encouraged and stand to do the will of God. Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and the things that Satan had offered him and be in bondage. The decision of Daniel had helped his friends to continue in their pursuit of God without defiling themselves. What Daniel and his friends did honor God and showed their true faithfulness to Him. Therefore God had bestowed on them an extraordinary favor and sympathy so that they could keep their highest commitment to God. As we too trust God and obey him, we should not

allow food to control us. We also need to help others to get delivered from the grasp of Satan and his traps. If we are weak in food matters, then we have much to lose and our talents and gifts will become ineffective in our service to God.

**11. “12 Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee. 13 But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: 14 And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.” (Luke 14:12-14 KJV)**

In the above verses from the Scripture, Jesus was pointing to two types of invitations mentioned below:

- A. **Worldly invitations:** The focus is on self and how pompous one is in order to receive the honor and the approval of men. Here Jesus recommended not to invite friends, brothers, relatives or rich neighbors because we would honor them and spend on them so that later on they would spend on us and honor us. **“Call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee.” (Luke 14:12 KJV)** In such practices, the focus is self-glorification and not about God and His Word and His commands. Also, we won't be able to be good stewards if we use our time, food, and money on rich people who do not need us to treat them, neither do we need them to treat us. But we need to be on the move to share with those, who are in need and critical situations, what God had given to us. **“He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor.” (Proverbs 22:9 KJV)**
- B. **God's Kingdom invitation:** Jesus is not speaking about hosting get together and inviting others. What Jesus is talking about in His Scripture is that when He blesses us, we need to bless others. But who will we bless and how? The focus is to invite people to God's Kingdom spending from our resources in order to bring them to God and teach them to do His will. **“13 But when thou**

***make a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: 14 And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.” (Luke 14:13-14 KJV)*** Therefore Jesus recommends that if we have resources and want to host a banquet, then we ought to invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. And of course the crippled, the lame, and the blind will not be able to come to us, so if we want to invite them, then we need to go to them. And when we go to them we need to share with them not only the material things that God has blessed us with but above all the Word of God, the Gospel of Jesus Christ that brings salvation and gives eternal life to the people. The real banquet that no one should miss is the banquet in heaven that we would have with Jesus when He will come and take us with Him to heaven to spend eternity with Him. ***“And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.” (Revelation 19:9 KJV)***

When Jesus addresses ***the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind***, he is speaking about people who are in distress and facing crisis in the form of chronic sicknesses, joblessness, disabilities due to infirmities, and so on. We need to help such people. These people are not in the position to give. We need to give them in order to bring them out of the state of emergency in their lives. We need to offer them relief and then after their recovery, they need to be rehabilitated to manage life. Finally, we need to train them and equip them to be fruitful and productive.

I have seen many who want to serve God without discretion and they invite people for food for the stomach ignoring the food for the soul. Their problems will not be solved with such kind of behaviors. Jesus did not minister to people in this way. He never used food to keep people with Him. Such a style will only exhaust us and empty our storehouse. Instead, we need to share with them God’s Word and direct our resources to meet their needs in accordance with God’s will and His good plan for their lives. The following food (Spiritual and Physical) we can share are:

- We can pray for the people and intercede on their behalf and ask the Lord to reveal Himself to them and satisfy their needs.
- We can share with them the message of Salvation, that Jesus had died for their sins on the cross to give them eternal life.
- We can advise them and instruct them from the Word of God so their problems would be solved and that they would have the right direction in their lives.
- We can share with them material things that they need like food, dress, lodging, transport, medical aid, medicine, and offer medical advice.

***“Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble.” (Psalm 41:1 KJV)*** God calls us to be good stewards of whatever we have received from Him and to direct our resources to serve and minister to those who are in distress to bring them near to God in order to bring relief to them. Such kind of attitude will lead us and enable us to provide services to the community who are around us. God has called us to be a blessing to others. ***“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.” (Matthew 5:7 KJV)*** We will be fruitful and effective for every mindful act of ours to the people in distress whom the Lord has placed around us. Jesus said the following: ***“For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.” (Mark 9:41 KJV)*** Oh yes indeed!

***12. “9 As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. 10 Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught. 11 Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken. 12 Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord. 13 Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise.” (John 21:9-13 KJV)*** Here, we read about Jesus cooking food for his disciples. Jesus cared for His disciples who were discouraged because of the events of the crucifixion that had passed in front of their eyes. Jesus arranged suitable food for them to show His love and concern. We should also be aware of the fact that Jesus didn't order food from restaurants. There is no mention of restaurants in the

Bible. But what I was able to see is that the disciples of Jesus and the people of God prepared their own food and carried it with them when they moved around to do God's ministry.

- A. *“And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes.” (Matthew 14:17 KJV)*
- B. *“And Jesus saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven, and a few little fishes.” (Matthew 15:34 KJV)*
- C. *“Then Joseph commanded to fill their sacks with corn, and to restore every man's money into his sack, and to give them provision for the way: and thus did he unto them.” (Genesis 42:25 KJV)*
- D. *“And he said unto them, This is that which the LORD hath said, To morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the LORD: bake that which ye will bake to day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning.” (Exodus 16:23 KJV)*
- E. *“17 And when he had lifted up his eyes, he saw a wayfaring man in the street of the city: and the old man said, Whither goest thou? and whence comest thou? 18 And he said unto him, We are passing from Bethlehem judah toward the side of mount Ephraim; from thence am I: and I went to Bethlehem judah, but I am now going to the house of the LORD; and there is no man that receiveth me to house. 19 Yet there is both straw and provender for our asses; and there is bread and wine also for me, and for thy handmaid, and for the young man which is with thy servants: there is no want of any thing.” (Judges 19:17-19 KJV)*

The habit of eating in restaurants, especially every now and then is expensive and money-draining. We need to train ourselves to be independent in preparing our own food in our homes. That will be healthy as well as an economical way of life.

But in exceptional cases, when we travel, we may not be able to carry our food with us over long distances, or we may not be able to bring sufficient amount of food and in this case, we will need to buy our food from outside.

- A. *“(For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.)” (John 4:8 KJV)*

Also, the Bible speaks about an inn to eat and sleep while traveling, like a hotel or guest house at that time.

- A. *“And as one of them opened his sack to give his ass provender in the inn, he espied his money; for, behold, it was in his sack's mouth.” (Genesis 42:27 KJV)*
- B. *“And it came to pass, when we came to the inn, that we opened our sacks, and, behold, every man's money was in the mouth of his sack, our money in full weight: and we have brought it again in our hand.” (Genesis 43:21 KJV)*
- C. *“And it came to pass by the way in the inn, that the LORD met him, and sought to kill him.” (Exodus 4:24 KJV)*
- D. *“And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.” (Luke 2:7 KJV)*
- E. *“34 And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35 And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.” (Luke 10:34-35 KJV)*

Eating food in restaurants is several times the cost of the same food when we prepare it at home. Therefore, let us be good stewards of the resources given to us. This is the style and way of living that we need to adopt, and we need to teach our children to do the same. It is not God's will for man to waste money in restaurants. God's will for man is to cook his own food.



# Chapter Eleven

## *Church and Food*

*“25 And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither? 26 Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. 27 Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.”*  
*(John 6:25-27 KJV)*

Organizing food festivals is now one of the widespread practices in almost all churches. The church caters more to physical food than spiritual food. Now we can see food being supplied after each worship, after prayer meetings, and after each Bible study. When food is the main agenda for people to flock to churches, then the spiritual quality of the crowd will be poor and the church resources will soon run dry.

After the miraculous multiplication of fish, people began to look for Jesus, not for spiritual food but to try and get perishable food from Him to fill their stomach. Jesus realized their cheap mentality and rebuked the people.

*“Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.” (1 Corinthians 10:7 KJV)* The verses below are quoted from the Old Testament: *“And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.” (Exodus 32:6 KJV)* It happened this way: *“1 And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. 2 And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in*

*the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me. 3 And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron. 4 And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. 5 And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, To morrow is a feast to the LORD. 6 And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.” (Exodus 32:1-6 KJV)* Moses was the leader and the people feared him. As long as he was with them they worshipped the Lord, but when Moses was late in coming down the mountain, the people became corrupted in their thinking and their hearts led them to sin against the Lord. They asked Aaron to make for them an idol to worship. They did this because their focus shifted from heavenly to earthly things. And the Bible says that they *“offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings.” (Exodus 32:6 KJV)* So everything was done in the name of the Lord but it was idol worship, for, *“The people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.” (Exodus 32:6 KJV)*

Nowadays, born-again Christians get corrupted and desire for earthly things. They develop a thirst for the gratification of the flesh and their hearts are far away from pleasing God. *“Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.” (Philippians 3:19 KJV)* Such Christians indulge in parties and many unnecessary banquets, in the name of the Lord, and they will even pray before they eat to show a false sense of religiosity. Peter admonished the believers not to go back to such practices, *“For the time past of our lives may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries.” (1 Peter 4:3 KJV)*

Another occasion for splurging on food is at birthday celebrations. The Bible does mention a few people who celebrated their birthdays. In the verses of Scripture below, let us see those who celebrated their birthdays:

**1. Pharaoh:** *“And it came to pass the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast unto all his servants: and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his servants.” (Genesis 40:20 KJV)* The feast was given to glorify Pharaoh himself.

**2. Herod:** *“But when Herod's birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod.” (Matthew 14:6 KJV)* Herod threw a birthday party to glorify himself and it ended up with John the Baptist getting beheaded.

The above two examples show clearly the celebration was for the birthday of non-believers.

There are another two less obvious occasions in the Scriptures that speak about people who celebrated their birthdays.

**3. Jeroboam:** *“In the day of our king the princes have made him sick with bottles of wine; he stretched out his hand with scorners.” (Hosea 7:5 KJV)* *‘In the day of our king,’* Jeroboam was the person who caused the ten tribes to be separated from Judah, and he set himself as king over them. He was the one who introduced the worship of the two calves of gold. It could be that *‘In the day of our king’* refers to the birthday of King Jeroboam, when he glorified himself, and the people around him magnified him and celebrated his birthday with him. He sought the company of scorners and drunkards who led him deeper into sin. King Jeroboam represents people who are called by the name of God, but neither honors Him nor His Word.

**4- The sons of Job:** *“And his sons went and feasted in their houses, every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them.” (Job 1:4 KJV)* When it says, *every one his day;* it may be their own birthdays. They would invite others, and spend on them, but God's presence was not with them. Poor Job, after they were done, interceded for them before God for cleansing them from sin. *“And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of*

***them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.” (Job 1:5 KJV)***

So here the sons of Job represent those who do not fear God but they infiltrate the church and they live and enjoy worldly material things, hiding behind prayers and the sacrifices of those who fear God while still being carnal.

There are no more examples. The Bible does not mention any saint who had celebrated his birthday.

Birthdays and wedding anniversaries must be a family affair; the family can gather together for their daily family worship and give thanks to God for sustaining them as a family and granting them abundant life. The Word of God stresses upon family worship; the man as the head of the family ought to lead the family in prayer, reading the Scriptures, singing to the Lord and kneeling down with the family members to give honor and glory to God and send in their petitions. Worship, prayer, and reading of the Bible, should be done daily by the family. Throwing parties that cost a fortune and wasting time and resources is not the right way to celebrate birthdays. If we do this, we will lose our focus on God and His purpose in our lives. If we promote such celebrations inside the body of Christ, then our worship will shift focus to idol worship. The focus of members will be self-centered rather than God-centered. Very soon, the church will run out of resources and when the real need rises up, the church has no money to do what is needful. Suppose every week, one family will celebrate a certain occasion and will invite many people; then how much time and money will be wasted on worthless things? As well as next week, another family will do the same, and the same losses will happen and that will be taken from the resources that God is giving to support the families. We need to realize our calling and God’s purpose for the Church. The church should not be a restaurant or a place to find food. ***“What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? what shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not.” (1 Corinthians 11:22 KJV)***

The Bible did not mention in the book of Acts that the church was celebrating birthday parties, otherwise, Peter and the rest of the

apostles would be running from table to table to pray for the celebrants as the pastors of the churches are doing nowadays. Acts 6, the dilemma of the church was how to feed the widows, ***“And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.”*** (Acts 6:1 KJV) Let us focus on meeting the needs of the people who are in need, and not get involved with activities that the Word of God had not approved, and further put ourselves in troubles that these activities and practices give birth to.

Paul said, ***“Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body.”*** (1 Corinthians 6:13 KJV) When the focus is on food and not on God and His Word and His will but at lavish parties, then another sin will link itself to food and that is sexual immorality.

Even if we have plenty of money, we don't need to spend it in such a way that displeases God and presents itself as a bad example for the new believers. Someone may say that the early believers were eating together as we can read, ***“And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart.”*** (Acts 2:46 KJV) They were rejected by society and so they ate together not because they wanted to indulge in parties for enjoyment, but because they lived together.

When food becomes the focus in the minds and hearts of people, it will hinder the work of God from progressing. In Acts 6: 1-2 there was a problem in food distribution as we can read here: ***“I And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. <sup>2</sup> Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the Word of God, and serve tables.”*** (Acts 6: 1-2 KJV) The food problem had affected even the efficiency of the apostles to pray and to preach the Word of God. When the members and the families in the church get too involved in food

preparation and parties, that finally will affect the efficiency of the church ministries in preaching and teaching the Word of God, and affect negatively the life of prayer and fasting of the church. Furthermore, the financial resources of the church and the families that compose the church will dwindle and be exhausted.

In the Old Testament God in His Word had ordained for His people certain feasts that they need to come together and celebrate; the feast of the unleavened bread, the feast of the weeks, and the feast of the tabernacles, ***“<sup>16</sup>Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the LORD empty.”*** (Deuteronomy 16:16 KJV) In the New Testament if we desire to celebrate and make food and eat together then it is worthy to observe what the Scriptures support; Christ’s Birth, ***“13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, “14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”*** (Luke 2:13-14 KJV) and Christ’s Resurrection, ***“5 And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. 6 He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.”*** (Matthew 28:5-6 KJV) ***“3 And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.) 4 And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people.”*** (Acts 12:3-4 KJV) The Scriptures does not support what churches are celebrating nowadays; birthdays, wedding anniversaries, Mother’s Day, Father’s Day, Valentine’s Day, Halloween, All Saints Day, Friend’s Day, etc.

We as church usually eat together when we celebrate the birth of Christ and the resurrection of Christ, as well as in our annual conference of casting the vision of the church to the workers and members. ***“For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”*** (Romans 14:17 KJV) God took the people of God to the wilderness and gave them manna to eat. They wanted to return to Egypt in order to eat other things. That should not be the case with us. Life in Christ is not

about food or parties. It is fasting rather than feasting. Our mind should be fixed on heavenly things to glorify God and to walk faithfully in His ways.

Some say that the father celebrated when the lost son came back home, ***“22 But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: 23 And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: 24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.” (Luke 15:22-24 KJV)*** But that does not mean and justify that after every church service there will be a banquet and celebration. We affirm our love to those who repent and come back to the Lord and to His church. I usually teach the leaders of the congregations and the rest of the workers that they may invite those who are coming back to the Lord for a meal and to have fellowship with them and assure them of our love and deep concern for their lives. I also usually direct everyone to evangelize and advice them to invite the new people to them to their houses and have a meal and fellowship with them around God’s Word to strengthen the bonds with them.

***“38 Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. 39 And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard his word. 40 But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. 41 And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: 42 But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.” (Luke 10:38-42 KJV)*** Nowadays Christians in churches behave like Martha with their much preparation of food that Jesus did not require. They are careful and troubled about many things that pertain with food and cooking and had put aside the importance of the Word of God; forgetting that people who come to Jesus need God’s Word and not delicious plates.

Jesus did give food to the people who were following Him. Here we will study the following Scripture and find out on what basis Jesus provided food for the crowd:

***A. "13 When Jesus heard of it, he departed thence by ship into a desert place apart: and when the people had heard thereof, they followed him on foot out of the cities. 14 And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick. 15 And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals. 16 But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat. 17 And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes. 18 He said, Bring them hither to me. 19 And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. 20 And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full. 21 And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children."*** (Matthew 14:13-21 KJV) Jesus had compassion on the people who were following Him so He healed their sick. And as the place where the people met the Lord was a desert place, and it was already getting late, Jesus was not willing to send the crowd away to go to the villages and buy themselves some food. So He multiplied the bread and the fish to feed them. So the Lord here considered two reasons why He offered food to the people, *first*, because it was too late, *second*, it was a desert place far from any nearby source of food. Now many link church meetings Bible study to food and they say that Jesus gave the hungry crowd food to eat. Jesus gave food for the reasons mentioned above. The people followed Christ on foot and were willing to stay with him late not because they expected food from Him, but because they were glad to hear and enjoy His teaching. When we combine our church meetings and teaching sessions with food, we will find that many people will come and attend. The focus will shift to the non-spiritual things and we need to be aware of that. The church is not a restaurant that people come to eat from, but a meeting place to receive the Word of God, the spiritual food, that will bring God's blessings into their lives as they obey.



The church can offer some physical food to keep the teaching session going on for people who stay for long hours and are far from the sources of food.

There is another occasion that Jesus provided food for the crowd. ***“29 And Jesus departed from thence, and came nigh unto the sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain, and sat down there. 30 And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus’ feet; and he healed them: 31 Inasmuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel. 32 Then Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way. 33 And his disciples say unto him, Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude? 34 And Jesus saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven, and a few little fishes. 35 And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. 36 And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake them, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. 37 And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets full. 38 And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children.”*** (Matthew 15:29-38 KJV) Jesus fed the people who stayed with him for three days. So when the people are aware that they need to stay long hours for teaching sessions or for doing certain service unto God, then it is better that they come prepared with their own food to sustain their body for doing God’s work. Or the church for such conditions should think as Jesus thought ahead of time to provide food for those who are coming from a far distance and staying long hours.

Also, we should notice that Jesus did not waste many resources to feed the people. He used only two kinds of food, seven loaves of bread and little fish, both nutritional in value. People of our times will opt to cook more food to please the crowd and stay out of the confrontation.

God is concerned about the food of his people who are in the mission fields doing His work. God's house, the church should also have concern for the food of the people who are engaged in mission work. ***"3 But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him; 4 How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests?" (Matthew 12:3-4 KJV)*** Jesus justified the act of David and His men when they ate the consecrated bread in the house of God to satisfy their hunger because they were fleeing from Saul who was after David to kill him. They were on a mission. ***"1 Then came David to Nob to Ahimelech the priest: and Ahimelech was afraid at the meeting of David, and said unto him, Why art thou alone, and no man with thee? 2 And David said unto Ahimelech the priest, The king hath commanded me a business, and hath said unto me, Let no man know any thing of the business whereabout I send thee, and what I have commanded thee: and I have appointed my servants to such and such a place. 3 Now therefore what is under thine hand? give me five loaves of bread in mine hand, or what there is present. 4 And the priest answered David, and said, There is no common bread under mine hand, but there is hallowed bread; if the young men have kept themselves at least from women. 5 And David answered the priest, and said unto him, Of a truth women have been kept from us about these three days, since I came out, and the vessels of the young men are holy, and the bread is in a manner common, yea, though it were sanctified this day in the vessel. 6 So the priest gave him hallowed bread: for there was no bread there but the shewbread, that was taken from before the LORD, to put hot bread in the day when it was taken away." (1 Samuel 21:1-6 KJV)*** God provided food for David and His men from the house of God because they were on a mission, doing the very work of God. They were in distress and in a state of emergency and the Lord provided them from His house, His church, the food they needed to sustain their physical body to go on and continue to serve Him.

In the book of 3 John, there is an emphasis on the importance of receiving and spending on the brethren who are sent by God to do the mission work. ***"5 Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers; 6 Which have borne witness***

*of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well: 7 Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. 8 We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth.” (3 John 1:5-8 KJV)* Apostle John had recommended that support be given to those who had dedicated their lives to serve Christ. They were honest people, and the proof of their honesty was that they hadn't received money from the non-believers, the Gentiles. So their motive was clean in serving the Lord and truly such kind of workers are eligible for the help of the church.

Further Scriptures support hospitality toward the Lord's work and toward those who are in missions of serving the Lord:

- A. *“28 And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further. 29 But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them. 30 And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them.” (Luke 24:28-30 KJV)*
  
- B. *“5 And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter: 6 He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do. 7 And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually; 8 And when he had declared all these things unto them, he sent them to Joppa. 9 On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour: 10 And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance.” (Acts 10:5-10 KJV)*
  
- C. *“And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house*

*of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him. (Acts 21:8 KJV)*

We learned from these Scriptures to support the Lord's work and to be hospitable in supporting those who are engaged in the mission work of God.

*“1 After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias. 2 And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased. 3 And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples. 4 And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh. 5 When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? 6 And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do. 7 Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little. 8 One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, 9 There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many? 10 And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. 11 And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would. 12 When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. 13 Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten.” (John 6:1-13 KJV)*

In the above passage that we read in John, we can see and witness the wonderful miracles that Jesus did by providing food for a crowd of people *about five thousand men*. The people followed the Lord *because they saw the signs he had performed by healing the sick*. People and crowd of people will continue to come to the Lord because of certain needs in their lives, like healing, miraculous solution to problems, provision of food, and some other needs.

The Lord was with His disciples when the crowd came seeking for Him. The Lord and His disciples worked side by side. Therefore when the crowds came to the Lord, they met the disciples and when they came to the disciples then they met the Lord. From this arrangement, we must understand that if we are disciples, then we must behave and act as a disciple. Jesus will not treat us or consider us as He considered and treated the crowd.

The crowd that came to Jesus didn't have faith, didn't have food and they lacked other things like healing, salvation, and personal relationship with God. They didn't know the Word of God and they weren't aware of prayer and they didn't know how to hear the voice of Jesus. But the disciples were opposite to them in their understanding of spiritual things; they had faith, personal relationship with God through Christ, they knew the Word of God and the promises of God. Furthermore, they had the gift of prayer, they were trained by God and knew Him for long. They were good stewards of their resources. They were good planners of events that God wanted them to hold in their lives.

The Lord would certainly expect from us, His disciples, to be a great help, a support and co-workers with Him to help Him in dealing with the new crowd of people. The Lord would expect from us as disciples the following:-

- 1- ***Faith in Christ to do miracles:*** People and crowds ultimately would be directed to Christ and we need to have faith in Christ that He will do something to reveal Himself and His power in our midst.
- 2- ***Concern and affection for the coming crowd:*** People and crowds have many needs and concerns, but the disciples should have the concern to help the crowd to meet their needs.
- 3- ***Responsible and accountable for their calling and ministry:*** God would expect from us to be disciples with accountability. The crowd of people that came towards Jesus proved to be challenging to the disciples, where the latter's accountability towards the ministry was put to the test. Jesus tested His disciples with this question, ***“Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?” (John 6:5 KJV)*** The disciples answered Him

in a way which showed that they were not responding to what God had called them to do. **“7 Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little. 8 One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, 9 There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?”** (John 6:7-9 KJV) Both these answers showed that the disciples were reluctant to act with a sense of responsibility in what they were called to do.

- 4- **Trusting God and putting what they have in the hand of God:** **“8 One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, 9 There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?”** (John 6:8-9 KJV)

The five loaves of bread and the two fish were not sufficient from the disciples' point of view, for they overlooked the fact that when the food was placed in the hands of Jesus, miracles would happen, needs would be met and people would get enough. Many disciples do not trust that God can sustain them and the ministry God had given them, despite their small jobs and the small income. Many look for sponsors to support them financially, in reaching the lost. Many look for people who can support them in funding a crusade, but the basic things that we have discussed are not in their minds.

- 5- **Attentive to His voice and obedience in applying His instructions:** In the passage from the book of John, Jesus spoke three statements to His disciples. His disciples responded to the Lord's instructions and truly Jesus did a marvelous miracle and met the need of a big crowd. The three statements that Jesus spoke further expounds to us how Jesus met the needs of the crowd and how He will enable us to continue to serve Him if we are transformed in the way we think and act with regard to stewardship, as mentioned in the Bible.

- A. **Jesus Address the problem:** He did that when said, **“Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?”** (John 6:5 KJV) In that particular situation, Jesus pointed out to His disciples what was needed to be addressed at that moment. As disciples of Jesus, we cannot make our own plans and go ahead with doing our own things. Our lives, our time, and our resources are all

God's and not ours. We may have certain plans but Jesus may have another plan and thought for us that He wants us to do. Therefore we need to be attentive to what Jesus wants to direct us to do in the next stage of our lives. The disciples at that moment of their life and ministry with Jesus were expected to be responsible to help the growing crowd and supply their needs. In this manner, we need to be ready to receive ministries and care for others who are lost. We need to prepare ourselves with resources and think wisely ahead of time to manage the growing needs for the ministry.

- B. *Jesus gave instruction in the process of solving the problem:*** He did that when He said, ***“Make the men sit down.”*** (*John 6:10 KJV*) Jesus instructed His disciples to make the people sit down and He did the rest. The disciples were bewildered when Christ mentioned that the crowd's need for food should be met. In their mind, they were probably contemplating different alternatives, but finally, Jesus requested them to do a simple thing and He did the rest to meet the need. When you are faced with certain problems, you need to be attentive to the voice of Jesus to hear from Him as to what you need to do. Jesus just told them, ***“Have the people sit down.”*** (*John 6:10 KJV*) Jesus did not say ‘go and buy,’ He did not say ‘cook,’ nor did He say ‘send the crowd away’. The point that we need to understand, to solve any problem is we need to hear exactly what He speaks to us regarding a particular situation and do it accordingly.
- C. *Jesus gave instruction to prevent the problem from coming back:*** He did that when He said, ***“Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.”*** (*John 6:12 KJV*) Jesus did not want His disciples to waste, He did not want them to lose anything, and He wanted them to be a good example to others around them. If the disciples had nothing left in their hands, then they were worse than the non-believers in the management of their lives. The disciples of Jesus were baffled by the big crowd. Jesus here instructed them to gather the extra and keep it aside so that when they were faced again with a crowd of that proportion, they would have something to share

and meet the need of the crowd of people who are coming to Him. Jesus cared for those people who came after Him and He fed them with bread and fish. After they all had enough to eat, Jesus said to his disciples, ***“Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.”*** (John 6:12 KJV) Jesus wanted them to realize that they should not waste any food. He wanted to teach them and give them a good lesson on how to be a good steward and how to save and preserve food. Did Jesus teach them that because He wasn't capable of performing the same miracle again? Most certainly not. It was to teach them the value of saving. Not only on food do we need to apply this principle but on money, water, electricity, time, and other things as well so that our service and ministry unto the Lord will continue. Many disciples waste and do not use their mind to save and use wisely what God has given them for the next crowd. Good Stewardship is like a prophylaxis to avoid putting ourselves in a similar problematic situation.



# Chapter Twelve

## *Farming*

***“17 And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; 18 Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; 19 In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” 23 Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.” (Genesis 3:17-19,23 KJV)***

After man sinned, the Lord gave him herbs to eat, ***thou shalt eat the herb of the field***, and entrusted to him the task to till the ground and from his work on the land to reproduce the herb. Farming is not an easy job; it needs much time and effort. But the man needed to work and plant his herbs so he would be able to eat and not die from hunger. Herbs are easy to be reproduced for they only take few weeks to few months to grow. But fruits are difficult because they need longer time, probably several years.

When God placed the man in the Garden eastward in Eden, it was planted by the Lord and everything was prepared for the man to live there and eat of its fruit. ***“8 And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. 9 And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. 10 And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads. 15 And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.” (Genesis 2:8-10, 15 KJV)*** The Lord established everything in that garden and He provided the rivers to water the trees of the garden. Adam only needed to dress the trees. But when God

drove him outside that garden, he needed to do everything with his hands from scratch. He needed to till and prepare the soil, plant the seeds, water the plants and wait patiently till he got herbs to eat. That is why today planting and working as a farmer is hardly any man's choice. But let us put in our minds that farming was a form of discipline for man after he sinned against God. It was humiliating for man to dig, to excavate the land and break the clods. He needed to bend his back to do that. But when he was in the Garden of Eden, he just had to raise his hand to pick the fruit from the tree and consume it any time he desired.

Farming continued to grow and progress. Men continued to farm to secure the source of healthy food. Before the flood, plant food was the only food available to man. Cain became a farmer. ***“And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD.” (Genesis 4:3 KJV)***

Noah also farmed after the flood. ***“And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard.” (Genesis 9:20 KJV)***

Isaac was a farmer. ***“Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year an hundredfold: and the LORD blessed him.” (Genesis 26:12 KJV)*** Isaac dug wells to find water. ***“18 And Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham: and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them. 19 And Isaac's servants digged in the valley, and found there a well of springing water. 20 And the herdmen of Gerar did strive with Isaac's herdmen, saying, The water is ours: and he called the name of the well Esek; because they strove with him. 21 And they digged another well, and strove for that also: and he called the name of it Sitnah. 22 And he removed from thence, and digged another well; and for that they strove not: and he called the name of it Rehoboth; and he said, For now the LORD hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.” (Genesis 26:18-22 KJV)*** Isaac and his men dug wells because water was needed to maintain the plants to yield fruit. He faced repeated troubles because of the wells that he dug, but he persevered till he settled with a stable

source of water to sustain his plantation. We need to persevere to maintain water for our plants.

The land needed to be watered so the plants would grow and yield fruit. God's Word show us how that can be: ***“10 For the land, whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out, where thou sowedst thy seed, and wateredst it with thy foot, as a garden of herbs: 11 But the land, whither ye go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven: 12 A land which the LORD thy God careth for: the eyes of the LORD thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year.” (Deuteronomy 11:10-12 KJV)*** Land can be watered either by man who constructs channels to bring the water from its source to where the plants are located, or it can be watered directly by God through the rain that He sends to the land in the right season. ***“Then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit.” (Leviticus 26:4 KJV)*** ***“The LORD shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow.” (Deuteronomy 28:12 KJV)***

The land is the source of food for man and for the animals. ***“For the tree of the field is man's life.” (Deuteronomy 20:19 KJV)*** Therefore, we need to persevere in farming and in planting trees to provide the necessary food. Farming protects the country from ruin. Egypt and the surrounding nations were protected from famine by the grain that had been stored in the seven years of plenty: ***“34 Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years. 35 And let them gather all the food of those good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities. 36 And that food shall be for store to the land against the seven years of famine, which shall be in the land of Egypt; that the land perish not through the famine.” (Genesis 41:34-36 KJV)***

Farming requires time, effort, an attitude of obedience, patience, and perseverance, a piece of land or soil and source of water. It is rewarded

by the yield obtained free of charge. The blessedness of farming can be enjoyed by being willing to comply with the discipline of God, accepting hard work and a hard life. Farming from the Bible's point of view is not a profession but a way of life and a requirement. Every man needs to plant and harvest herbs, vegetables, and fruits.

Many people have houses with gardens full of beautiful flowers of different scents and colors. But actually, God wants us to plant plants so that we can eat of their fruits, leaves, flowers, and seeds. It is a source of living, a way to exercise our bodies, live healthy lives and at the same time behold their beauty. It is a way to save money, to enjoy fresh food, to work as a team with our family members, and enjoy the wonders of God. We can only marvel at their growth from a mere seed to a huge fruit-bearing tree.

It is one way of saving our finances. In many parts of the world, people are living in houses that are surrounded by lands and they have a source of water such as rain to water the plants. Men, women, and children in their free time can get involved in planting and surely they will get a harvest of what they plant.

I had a dream that recurred several times. In the dream, I was collecting coins belonging to my country from the dry soil. In the dream the coin collection was going on and my two hands were full and still, everywhere I found coins that I needed to collect. Around me, there were people moving around but none one of them thought of bending down and collecting the coins that I was seeing. I was wondering in the dream why the people were not coming and collecting because what I was collecting was equal to a day's wage.

Around the building that I am residing and where our church worship center is located, there is a piece of land beside and behind it full of sand. On that land, one day we found a big sack of coins belonging to different countries. Some of these coins were of high value and we added it to our church treasury. On the same piece of land, the Lord directed my wife to plant vegetables of various kinds. She dug and prepared the land for planting. We utilized the water that we collected after washing dishes and clothes, carrying it in buckets to water these plants. After a while, we dug small channels in the ground and directed

the water from our kitchen into these channels to water our plants. For the last few years, we have been using the products of our own garden. I have stopped going to the market to buy vegetables. The whole family is involved in the garden; one plants and the other waters. ***“I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.” (1 Corinthians 3:6 KJV)*** We don't need to buy fertilizer. We use as fertilizer the fallen leaves of the trees, the vegetable and fruit peels, and the eggshells after we powder it. We collect these materials and put them into sealed containers layered with any kind of soil and then covered with water to decompose by itself, and in a few month's time, they serve as fertilizer.

We collect containers of different sizes to grow plants. We stack in the lower parts of the containers dead leaves and the vegetable peels and add water to it, then above this layer we put the soil and sow our seeds. In a few months' time when the plants begin to grow, there is natural compost to support the plants and enable them to yield good fruit.

We get large quantities of vegetables and sometimes there is a surplus which we store. During the harvest time, we are very joyful to harvest very big pumpkins, lettuce, tomatoes, gourds, greens, beans, and eggplants. We freeze a portion of the vegetables to keep a reserve for the hot summer months because the place we reside in is very hot and most of the plants cannot survive the heat. Moreover, in summer the price of vegetables shoots up. That's why we gather our vegetables in autumn, winter, and spring and freeze them to consume in summer.

In spring, when our vegetable garden is green and well-watered and colorful, it is visited by swarms of honey bees. The plants produce flowers that attract the bees to feed on the pollen. The bees help the plants in fertilization and thus increase their harvest.

Every month I am able to save because I don't need to go to the market to buy vegetables. The extra money I collect over a period of a few months which I give as a burnt offering to the Lord.

The Lord has increased our faith and trust in Him as He has shown us on several occasions that as we obey Him, He will be the one to add blessings to our lives and give us the harvest so that we can eat the

fruit of our land. ***“Yea, the LORD shall give that which is good; and our land shall yield her increase.” (Psalms 85:12 KJV)*** We give to our church members what God has blessed us with, and we have taught our members and our co-workers in the different congregations by sharing with them our experience in farming and storing food. We got a good number of them to get started on their own gardens and their experience has been the same. And every time they harvest, they bring to the Lord their first fruit. That reminds me of what happened at the time of Solomon. ***“And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon.” (1 Kings 4:25 KJV)***

God taught us about plants. Solomon wrote about the plants. ***“And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall.” (1 Kings 4:33 KJV)*** Solomon planted vineyards and provided water for them, ***“4 I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards: 5 I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits: 6 I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees.” (Ecclesiastes 2:4-6 KJV)***

King Uzziah was fond of agricultural work. ***“Also he built towers in the desert, and digged many wells: for he had much cattle, both in the low country, and in the plains: husbandmen also, and vine dressers in the mountains, and in Carmel: for he loved husbandry.” (2 Chronicles 26:10 KJV)***

God teaches us how to plant. ***“And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.” (Isaiah 5:2 KJV)*** We are taught that the land we want to plant it should be fenced around so as to not allow trespassers to step on the new plants or pick up the fruits. God teaches us to choose the best of our seed to plant and to observe and watch what we plant and attend to its needs. ***“I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.” (John 15:1 KJV)***

Farming needs continued and persistent effort for its sustenance; otherwise poverty will be our lot. ***“30 I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; 31 And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. 32 Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction. 33 Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: 34 So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man.”*** (Proverbs 24:30-34 KJV) Many people have good resources to farm but they don't show diligence, therefore you see the lands that surround their houses without fruit. The prudent hard-working wife cultivates a garden and motivates her household into teamwork to maintain it. ***“She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.”*** (Proverbs 31:16 KJV)

God teaches us the right season and the right time. ***“1 To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: 2 A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted.”*** (Ecclesiastes 3:1-2 KJV) ***“4 He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap. 6 In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.”*** (Ecclesiastes 11:4, 6 KJV)

God has taught us how to get water. ***“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:”*** (Matthew 7:7 KJV) God has taught us to pray and ask him to send us rain so our plants will be watered, ***“17 Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. 18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.”*** (James 5:17-18 KJV) ***“16 Now therefore stand and see this great thing, which the LORD will do before your eyes. 17 Is it not wheat harvest to day? I will call unto the LORD, and he shall send thunder and rain; that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which ye have done in the sight of the LORD, in asking you a king. 18 So Samuel called unto***

*the LORD; and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day: and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel.” (1 Samuel 12:16-18 KJV)* God has taught us that sin can hinder the coming of the rain, but prayer and confession of sin will bring the rain and heal the land: *“35 When heaven is shut up, and there is no rain, because they have sinned against thee; if they pray toward this place, and confess thy name, and turn from their sin, when thou afflictest them: 36 Then hear thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of thy servants, and of thy people Israel, that thou teach them the good way wherein they should walk, and give rain upon thy land, which thou hast given to thy people for an inheritance.” (1 Kings 8:35-36 KJV)* *“If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.” (2 chronicles 7:14 KJV)* Therefore, we need to be careful lest sin takes away the rain and the blessings of God and makes our land sick and infertile.

*“16 And Caleb said, He that smiteth Kirjathsepher, and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife. 17 And Othniel the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, took it: and he gave him Achsah his daughter to wife. 18 And it came to pass, as she came unto him, that she moved him to ask of her father a field: and she lighted off her ass; and Caleb said unto her, What wouldest thou? 19 Who answered, Give me a blessing; for thou hast given me a south land; give me also springs of water. And he gave her the upper springs, and the nether springs.” (Joshua 15:16-19 KJV)* Achsah was a wise woman. When she got a piece of land, she worked it out to secure a source of water to water it.

God has shown us how the plants grow and the right time to harvest them. *“26 And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; 27 And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. 28 For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. 29 But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.” (Mark 4:26-29 KJV)* We get so encouraged when



we see plants growing under the power of God. It is He who makes them grow and prospers the work of our hands.

God has taught us the right time to sow; for in every place there is a right time to plant a particular plant. ***“31 And the flax and the barley was smitten: for the barley was in the ear, and the flax was bolled. 32 But the wheat and the rie were not smitten: for they were not grown up.” (Exodus 9:31-32 KJV)***

God has taught us the right time to plant every plant and the time to harvest and how to do it. ***“23 Give ye ear, and hear my voice; hearken, and hear my speech. 24 Doth the plowman plow all day to sow? doth he open and break the clods of his ground? 25 When he hath made plain the face thereof, doth he not cast abroad the fitches, and scatter the cummin, and cast in the principal wheat and the appointed barley and the rie in their place? 26 For his God doth instruct him to discretion, and doth teach him. 27 For the fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument, neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cummin; but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod. 28 Bread corn is bruised; because he will not ever be threshing it, nor break it with the wheel of his cart, nor bruise it with his horsemen. 29 This also cometh forth from the LORD of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.” (Isaiah 28:23-29 KJV)*** The day after I wrote this part of the book, we had dried a large amount of mustard seed. I learned from what I had written that to take the seeds easily and speedily from the ears, we need not crush the ears but gently beat them with a staff. We were able to collect a large number of mustard seeds using this method that we had learned directly from God’s Word in ***Isaiah 28:23-29 KJV***.

We learned also from the plants many things about life and we understood clearly why many of Jesus’ parables were about plants. A seed can produce up to a hundredfold if we follow the following Biblical instructions:

**Removing rock:** ***“And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up.” (Matthew 13:4 KJV)***

**Keeping adequate soil:** *“5 Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth. 6 And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.” (Matthew 13:5-6 KJV)*

**Removing thorns:** *“And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them.” (Matthew 13:7 KJV)*

**Preparing good ground:** *“But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.” (Matthew 13:8 KJV)* Good soil needs to be prepared free from stones and with a good fertilizer.

**To be aware of tares:** *“But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.” (Matthew 13:25 KJV)*

**Tithing our income so God will remove the pest:** *“10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. 11 And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts.” (Malachi 3:10-11 KJV)*

**Giving our firstfruits to God who will maintain the good harvest:** *“9 Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: 10 So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.” (Proverbs 3:9-10 KJV)*

**To be aware of worms that can consume the plant overnight:** *“6 And the LORD God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd. 7 But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered.” (Jonah 4:6-7 KJV)* We learn not to be

angry and rebel against God and His will when we fail to reach the lost. Otherwise, God will send worms to destroy our plants and that will disturb our peace.

**To use fertilizer:** *“7 Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? 8 And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: 9 And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.” (Luke 13:7-9 KJV)* Fertilizer will strengthen the plants and make them grow faster and into more robust form. We use natural fertilizer as I described previously.

God has taught us how to store for times of scarcity: *“47 And in the seven plenteous years the earth brought forth by handfuls. 48 And he gathered up all the food of the seven years, which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities: the food of the field, which was round about every city, laid he up in the same. 49 And Joseph gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left numbering; for it was without number.” (Genesis 41:47-49 KJV)* *“6 Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: 7 Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, 8 Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.” (Proverbs 6:6-8 KJV)*

God has taught us to be patient so we that shall be successful farmers in our vineyards and in God’s Kingdom. *“Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.” (James 5:7 KJV)* And we will be rewarded with a harvest. *“The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits.” (2 Timothy 2:6 KJV)*

I realized the meaning of the dream that God had shown me; for I was directed to take my life and the life of my family and the ministry under my care in a new direction based on Biblical principles that reveal how to see things from God’s perspective. Farming is not an option or a profession but a style of Christian living that the Bible states and the Word of God describe it.

# Chapter Thirteen

## *Famines*

*“Son of man, when the land sinneth against me by trespassing grievously, then will I stretch out mine hand upon it, and will break the staff of the bread thereof, and will send famine upon it, and will cut off man and beast from it:” (Ezekiel 14:13 KJV)*

*“1 The word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah concerning the dearth. 2 Judah mourneth, and the gates thereof languish; they are black unto the ground; and the cry of Jerusalem is gone up. 3 And their nobles have sent their little ones to the waters: they came to the pits, and found no water; they returned with their vessels empty; they were ashamed and confounded, and covered their heads. 4 Because the ground is chapt, for there was no rain in the earth, the plowmen were ashamed, they covered their heads.” (Jeremiah 14:1-4 KJV)*

Why do we need to be good stewards of what the Lord has blessed us with, why do we need to save, and why do we need to teach others about saving and about making wealth? There is another reason mentioned in the Scripture why we need to save. The Scripture speaks about events that had happened in the life of the people of God that would teach us further the importance of saving. The Scripture speaks about famines that had occurred at various times in the Scripture. Famines had happened in the Old Testament and in the New Testament too. To pass through such periods, we need to have savings and wealth. The following are some of the recorded cases of famines in the Bible:

*I. “And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land.” (Genesis 12:10 KJV)* So here Abraham, his family and the people with him, the church passed through famine. The church may pass through famine and so wealth and saving are required to overcome it.

**II. “And there was a famine in the land, beside the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went unto Abimelech king of the Philistines unto Gerar.” (Genesis 26:1 KJV)** There was a famine during the time of Isaac too. So there was a famine in the life of the father as well as the son. So here when we speak about saving money or gold, it is to be kept to face famine or such kind of circumstances. We don’t go and buy gold because we love gold and then we say it is a good investment for the future. No, that is worldliness. Save your resources to meet scarcity of any kind. It is better to save a stable currency that keeps its value than gold. Because when you sell gold, you will always lose the value of its manufacture.

**III. “1 Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said unto his sons, Why do ye look one upon another? 2 And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live, and not die.” (Genesis 42:1-2)** In the life of Jacob and his children, there was famine. And we can read about this famine: **“56 And the famine was over all the face of the earth: and Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold unto the Egyptians; and the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt. 57 And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn; because that the famine was so sore in all lands.” (Genesis 41:56-57 KJV)** So the famine here was severe and had affected the whole world. So here Jacob was ready and able to pass through the famine because he had stored money. **“11 And their father Israel said unto them, If it must be so now, do this; take of the best fruits in the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present, a little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds: 12 And take double money in your hand; and the money that was brought again in the mouth of your sacks, carry it again in your hand; peradventure it was an oversight.” (Genesis 43:11-12 KJV)** So we can learn here that if there is no income or revenue coming in for a certain time, then we need to use the reserve we have to cope with the situation.

God disciplines us by cutting our financial source, depriving us of jobs, a steady salary, and resources in order to check the efficiency of our stewardship. Sometimes God allows famine to come into our lives

to check if we have reserves of what He had given us in abundance in the past.

So there are times of plenty and times of scarcity and even famine that we need to go through so that we are tested on our stewardship. If we had been honest, faithful, and a responsible steward and good manager when He had given us much, then at the time of famine or scarcity we can survive. But if we had sinned and squandered away what He had given us, then at the time of famine, our sin will find us out and we will have to face its consequences.

Why do we need to save? To face the future of course! The Lord Jesus said, ***“Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” (Matthew 6:34 KJV)***

Here Jesus said, ***“Take therefore no thought for the morrow.” (Matthew 6:34 KJV)*** As long as we are good stewards today of what has been entrusted to us, then we don't have to worry about tomorrow. But, if we are not good stewards of what God has entrusted to us, then we need to worry about the future, why even about tomorrow. So how we behave today will be the down payment for the future. Squandering by itself is sin and God shall visit such sins with famines. Squandering will happen when people spend on idols, on their worldliness, worthless practices, and on their own will and plans. Those who squander and do not save really need to be worried about tomorrow and their future.

Our saving and reserves will come in handy when we serve others who are in need and who are willing to serve the Lord but are hindered and troubled by the financial limitations in their lives.

The Lord has blessed us and has called us to be a blessing to other nations. For this reason, God had given us the spiritual gifts to spread the Gospel, but the material things are important and in fact needed to bring the Gospel. Therefore, as we commit ourselves to be good stewards and save of what is entrusted to us, then God's blessings will flow through us to other people whom God has put around us, or whom God bring to us. That is the ultimate purpose of God.

*IV. "1 The word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah concerning the dearth. 2 Judah mourneth, and the gates thereof languish; they are black unto the ground; and the cry of Jerusalem is gone up. 3 And their nobles have sent their little ones to the waters: they came to the pits, and found no water; they returned with their vessels empty; they were ashamed and confounded, and covered their heads. 4 Because the ground is chapt, for there was no rain in the earth, the plowmen were ashamed, they covered their heads. 5 Yea, the hind also calved in the field, and forsook it, because there was no grass. 6 And the wild asses did stand in the high places, they snuffed up the wind like dragons; their eyes did fail, because there was no grass. 7 O LORD, though our iniquities testify against us, do thou it for thy name's sake: for our backslidings are many; we have sinned against thee. 8 O the hope of Israel, the saviour thereof in time of trouble, why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night? 9 Why shouldest thou be as a man astonied, as a mighty man that cannot save? yet thou, O LORD, art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name; leave us not. 10 Thus saith the LORD unto this people, Thus have they loved to wander, they have not refrained their feet, therefore the LORD doth not accept them; he will now remember their iniquity, and visit their sins. 11 Then said the LORD unto me, Pray not for this people for their good. 12 When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and an oblation, I will not accept them: but I will consume them by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence. 13 Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, the prophets say unto them, Ye shall not see the sword, neither shall ye have famine; but I will give you assured peace in this place. 14 Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart. 15 Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the prophets that prophesy in my name, and I sent them not, yet they say, Sword and famine shall not be in this land; By sword and famine shall those prophets be consumed. 16 And the people to whom they prophesy shall be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem because of the famine and the sword; and they shall have none to bury them, them, their wives, nor their sons, nor*

*their daughters: for I will pour their wickedness upon them. 17 Therefore thou shalt say this word unto them; Let mine eyes run down with tears night and day, and let them not cease: for the virgin daughter of my people is broken with a great breach, with a very grievous blow. 18 If I go forth into the field, then behold the slain with the sword! and if I enter into the city, then behold them that are sick with famine! yea, both the prophet and the priest go about into a land that they know not. 19 Hast thou utterly rejected Judah? hath thy soul lothed Zion? why hast thou smitten us, and there is no healing for us? we looked for peace, and there is no good; and for the time of healing, and behold trouble! 20 We acknowledge, O LORD, our wickedness, and the iniquity of our fathers: for we have sinned against thee. 21 Do not abhor us, for thy name's sake, do not disgrace the throne of thy glory: remember, break not thy covenant with us. 22 Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain? or can the heavens give showers? art not thou he, O LORD our God? therefore we will wait upon thee: for thou hast made all these things.*” (Jeremiah 14:1-22 KJV)

This chapter was written by the prophet Jeremiah on the occasion of a great drought, for want of rain. This judgment was severe as described in Jeremiah 14:1-6. *“1 The word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah concerning the dearth. 2 Judah mourneth, and the gates thereof languish; they are black unto the ground; and the cry of Jerusalem is gone up. 3 And their nobles have sent their little ones to the waters: they came to the pits, and found no water; they returned with their vessels empty; they were ashamed and confounded, and covered their heads. 4 Because the ground is chapt, for there was no rain in the earth, the plowmen were ashamed, they covered their heads. 5 Yea, the hind also calved in the field, and forsook it, because there was no grass. 6 And the wild asses did stand in the high places, they snuffed up the wind like dragons; their eyes did fail, because there was no grass.”* (Jeremiah 14:1-6 KJV) There was no water to drink and so there was no food and even no grass for the animals.

In verse 7, *“O LORD, though our iniquities testify against us, do thou it for thy name's sake: for our backslidings are many; we have sinned against thee.”* (Jeremiah 14:7 KJV) Jeremiah confessed to God that the cause of this famine was the sin of the people. He prayed



to God to put an end to this calamity and to return in mercy to their land as we can read in verses 8 and 9: ***“8 O the hope of Israel, the saviour thereof in time of trouble, why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night? 9 Why shouldest thou be as a man astonied, as a mighty man that cannot save? yet thou, O LORD, art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name; leave us not.” (Jeremiah 14:8-9 KJV)***

But God confirmed that He would proceed in His judgment and send the famine because they were not willing to repent but determined to proceed in their transgression as described in verses 10 to 12: ***“10 Thus saith the LORD unto this people, Thus have they loved to wander, they have not refrained their feet, therefore the LORD doth not accept them; he will now remember their iniquity, and visit their sins. 11 Then said the LORD unto me, Pray not for this people for their good. 12 When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and an oblation, I will not accept them: but I will consume them by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence.” (Jeremiah 14:10-12 KJV)*** Therefore, we need to be very careful in how we walk with God because if we sin against Him, He will surely judge us and He might send famine and take away what He had blessed us with.

In verses 13 to 16, ***“13 Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, the prophets say unto them, Ye shall not see the sword, neither shall ye have famine; but I will give you assured peace in this place. 14 Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart. 15 Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the prophets that prophesy in my name, and I sent them not, yet they say, Sword and famine shall not be in this land; By sword and famine shall those prophets be consumed. 16 And the people to whom they prophesy shall be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem because of the famine and the sword; and they shall have none to bury them, them, their wives, nor their sons, nor their daughters: for I will pour their wickedness upon them.” (Jeremiah 14:13-16 KJV)*** Jeremiah tried to excuse the people and

spare them, by putting the blame on their false prophets who were misleading them, but God responded to that by passing His judgment on both the people and the false prophets. God did not excuse the people, because they had the Word of God in their hands and should have been discerning to know that the false prophets were telling them things contradicting God's Word. Moreover, they had complied with the teachings of the false prophets. ***"1 If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, 2 And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; 3 Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. 4 Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him."*** (Deuteronomy 13:1-4 KJV) Nowadays, the churches are so keen on people observing days like birthdays, wedding anniversaries, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Valentine's Day, Halloween, and All Saints Days, and spend much on these days of idol worship. Also, the churches encourage people to be lavish in their food, clothes, giving and exchange of gifts. Many false prophets motivate people to live for the moment and not worry about tomorrow. And they say to the people lavish spending is the love of Christ.

What is the fault of the innocent people who have been misled by false teachers, false prophets and false pastors who don't teach them the whole truth of God's Word and don't restrain them from wrong spending? The people have the Bible in their hands and they need to read it and discern that they are misled by false teachings and decide against indulging in idolatry and wrong practices that most churches are promoting nowadays. Hence, people have no excuse, for God's Word is available to all through the Scripture and if they fail to obey it, they will carry the consequences of their sins.

With the wave of preaching toward worldliness, idolatry, and teaching against saving, we find many families, individual members, and churches sank in debts and loans because of the ongoing spreading famine. It is so miserable today to see many who believe in Christ are

in a financial breakdown. I asked the Lord, ‘What is the fault of the people who are misled by false teaching and lack the instruction of thrifty living?’ The Lord spoke to me, “They are still responsible for what had happened because they have my Word and did not obey it, therefore they will carry the consequences of their sins.”

In verse 11 God further instructed Jeremiah not to pray for the people. ***“Then said the LORD unto me, Pray not for this people for their good.” (Jeremiah 14:11 KJV)*** But Jeremiah continued to intercede for the people as you read in verses 17-22, ***“17 Therefore thou shalt say this word unto them; Let mine eyes run down with tears night and day, and let them not cease: for the virgin daughter of my people is broken with a great breach, with a very grievous blow. 18 If I go forth into the field, then behold the slain with the sword! and if I enter into the city, then behold them that are sick with famine! yea, both the prophet and the priest go about into a land that they know not. 19 Hast thou utterly rejected Judah? hath thy soul lothed Zion? why hast thou smitten us, and there is no healing for us? we looked for peace, and there is no good; and for the time of healing, and behold trouble! 20 We acknowledge, O LORD, our wickedness, and the iniquity of our fathers: for we have sinned against thee. 21 Do not abhor us, for thy name's sake, do not disgrace the throne of thy glory: remember, break not thy covenant with us. 22 Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain? or can the heavens give showers? art not thou he, O LORD our God? therefore we will wait upon thee: for thou hast made all these things.” (Jeremiah 14:17-22 KJV).***

A sin of any kind will move God toward disciplining us and when God pays us for our sins, He will do that by removing our privileges and resources and putting us through famine. So we need to live carefully and live in righteousness, otherwise, His judgment will visit us.

The Lord may send famine to the people and the nations around us, and may even send famine to the places where we live, but we don't need to be worry because He is doing that to judge people's sins and as long as we walk with Him in righteousness and holiness and are good stewards, the famine will not affect us.

**V. “I Then spake Elisha unto the woman, whose son he had restored to life, saying, Arise, and go thou and thine household, and sojourn wheresoever thou canst sojourn: for the LORD hath called for a famine; and it shall also come upon the land seven years. 2 And the woman arose, and did after the saying of the man of God: and she went with her household, and sojourned in the land of the Philistines seven years.” (2 Kings 8:1-2 KJV)** This is an example of a famine that affected the people of God and not the Philistines, who were unbelievers. Sometimes God sends famine to His people in order to discipline them and judge them. This example of Scripture can be an answer to those who refuse to accept that the people of God can face famine when they sin against God. But God will spare the righteous among His people as He spared that righteous woman who honored Elisha.

**VI. “10 And David's heart smote him after that he had numbered the people. And David said unto the LORD, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech thee, O LORD, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly. 11 For when David was up in the morning, the word of the LORD came unto the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying, 12 Go and say unto David, Thus saith the LORD, I offer thee three things; choose thee one of them, that I may do it unto thee. 13 So Gad came to David, and told him, and said unto him, Shall seven years of famine come unto thee in thy land? or wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies, while they pursue thee? or that there be three days' pestilence in thy land? now advise, and see what answer I shall return to him that sent me.” (2 Samuel 24:10-13 KJV)** When David sinned against God by counting the men of war, the Lord sent him the prophet to choose what kind of judgment He wanted to receive from God and one of the options was a famine for seven years.

**VII. “I Then there was a famine in the days of David three years, year after year; and David enquired of the LORD. And the LORD answered, It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites.” (2 Samuel 21:1 KJV)** God might call the attention of people to sins they had done in their past in order for them to correct it. God called the attention of David to a particular sin by causing a famine in the land for three years, that forced him to inquire

of God and finally, God spoke to him of what he needed to correct. Famine can be also used by God to lead us to correct certain errors that had happened in the past. Therefore, God may send famine for various reasons and we need to find out why.

**VIII. “Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons.” (Ruth 1:1 KJV)** This is another famine that had happened in the land of the people of God at the time of the judges.

**IX. “11 And he said, A certain man had two sons: 12 And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. 13 And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. 14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.” (Luke 15:11-14),** When the lost son left his father’s house, he squandered his money on wild living. The lost son was faced with a famine that God had ordained to bring him back to God. Many workers and churches are doing now the same as the lost son did when he left his father’s house. They are squandering the money in their custody on wild living. The lost son squandered it because he thought of it as ‘*My portion*’. Those who think like that are selfish and lack wisdom. Famine will come on such people to wake them up and to draw them back to God, to change their lives from sinful styles (Squandering, Saying, ‘My money!’ Living a life without the word “saving” in their vocabulary) to a godly life (Humility, Careful spending, Saying ‘It is God’s money.’ Living a life with the word “saving” in their vocabulary).

The common name for this parable in **Luke 15:11-14** is the prodigal son. The meaning of the ‘prodigal’ is wasteful, reckless, profligate, extravagant, dissolute, and uncontrolled. His sin as described by the elder brother is that he devoured the father’s living, **“But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.” (Luke 15:30 KJV)**

The Hebrews word for ‘devoured’ is ‘Katesthio’, which means to consume by eating, or devour by squandering, waste, strip one of his goods, or to devour by fire. Now church members and churches who are in debt and that spend all that they receive without the mind or prospect of saving are devouring the resources of God. The lost son ***hath devoured*** the resources of God ***with harlots***. The believers and churches today who entertain and indulge in worldliness as the nonbelievers do are disobeying God, breaking their covenant with Him, prostituting themselves with other gods of the nations around them, and devouring all the resources and means that God gave them for living on idols (devils). They do as the Israelites did after entering the Promised Land: ***“And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the LORD; but they did not so.” (Judges 2:17 KJV)*** Jesus called Satan the prince of this world, ***“Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.” (John 14:30 KJV)*** Born again Christians and churches who are following worldly practices and celebrations are idol worshippers.

Wrong ways of spending and wasting resources on nonscriptural ways is spiritual adultery, ***“A whoring after other gods.” (Judges 2:17 KJV)*** Like the lost son who spent his father’s money on harlots; devouring his living on harlots, and ending up in poverty without the ability to even fill his stomach with food, ***“14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. 15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. 16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.” (Luke 15:14-16 KJV)*** I have seen many people, even those having big salaries, squeezed and unable to eat adequately because once their salaries are deposited in banks, the salaries are eaten by loans and high interests of credit cards and debts, and what is left is little and hardly enough to fill the stomach.

Wasting and devouring resources is sinful and bring people away from God, away from serving God’s purpose, and causing them poverty, misery, and hunger as He promised, ***“13 Therefore thus saith the***

***Lord GOD, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed: 14 Behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit.” (Isaiah 65:13-14 KJV)***

Therefore, when the lost son came back to his senses, he thought that those who serve God are in plenty while he is starving, ***“And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!” (Luke 15:17 KJV)*** Therefore he made his decision to come back to God, ***“I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee.” (Luke 15:18 KJV)*** When we believers and the Church of God start to go back to the godly principles of stewardship, consider saving, and value all the resources of God, spending wisely, repenting of the sins of devouring the resources of living, and giving honestly what belongs to God, will receive plenty from God.

***X. “27 And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. 28 And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar.” (Acts 11: 27-28 KJV)*** Famine also happened in the life of the New Testament church. Therefore, we can conclude from the various examples that there are various reasons and purposes for famine to strike the land and we need to be aware and discerning how to face each and every one of them.

***XI. “11 Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD. 12 And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it. 13 In that day shall the fair virgins and young men faint for thirst.” (Amos 8:11-13 KJV)*** This the worst of all famines that people are experiencing now, especially the people of God, who have turned their backs to the Word of God and started to listen to false prophets and take delight to live in lies. They live in disobedience and fall short of the promises of God.

Lack of stewardship, lack of saving, and lack of thriftiness will result in famine in the form of debts, loans, and lack of wisdom in managing finances, which are the manifestation of the famine in the Word of God and lack of teaching in respect to the topic of finances that many of the churches lack today.

The promise of God is this, ***“I And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: 12 The LORD shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow.” (Deuteronomy 28:1,12 KJV)*** God’s Word declared, ***“and thou shalt not borrow.”*** Disobedience to the commands of God will put us in debts and make us borrowers rather than lenders.

The church that has members and workers in debt and with loans to pay is lacking in the teaching of good stewardship and the discipline involved in managing finances and that church is in urgent need of an expert to counsel her members, workers, and the church leaders. The following is a questionnaire to find out the financial status of each and every individual.

Answer the following questionnaire:

1. Do you have work?
2. Do you have enough income to manage?
3. Do you have credit?
4. Do you have loans?
5. Do you tithe your income?
6. Do you give your first fruits?
7. Do you give your offerings?
8. Do you help the poor and the needy?
9. Do you have savings?
10. Does your church teach you from the pulpit about finances?



11. Does your church have someone available to counsel you about finances?
12. Does your church try to find out if you have financial struggles in order to counsel you and advise you?

If the answers to questions 3 and 4 are yes and the answers to the rest of the questions are no, then you are in a critical situation and need an experienced person to counsel you. You can approach us to help you get out of the rut.

If the answers to questions 3 and 4 are no and the answers to the rest of the questions are yes, then you are on the safe ground but you still need an experienced person to counsel you in order for you to be more equipped in the matter of finances.

# Chapter Fourteen

## *How God Solves Our Financial Problems - Counseling*

*“1 Now there cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets unto Elisha, saying, Thy servant my husband is dead; and thou knowest that thy servant did fear the LORD: and the creditor is come to take unto him my two sons to be bondmen. 2 And Elisha said unto her, What shall I do for thee? tell me, what hast thou in the house? And she said, Thine handmaid hath not any thing in the house, save a pot of oil. 3 Then he said, Go, borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbours, even empty vessels; borrow not a few. 4 And when thou art come in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons, and shalt pour out into all those vessels, and thou shalt set aside that which is full. 5 So she went from him, and shut the door upon her and upon her sons, who brought the vessels to her; and she poured out. 6 And it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said unto her son, Bring me yet a vessel. And he said unto her, There is not a vessel more. And the oil stayed. 7 Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest.” (2 King 4:1-7 KJV)*

God is always there to help us, solve our problems, and to provide for our daily needs. But God has principles that we need to pay heed to and apply in our lives. We need to understand and accept that the most precious thing that God has placed on earth is His church and the most precious thing that His church can give to the world and to the people of this world is the Word of God. The Word of God offers advice and the right council which is most needed nowadays in the life of people. Finances and the management of finances is one of the topics that is hardly mastered by many. In addition to that, many who fall short of it fall a victim to debt and loans and face the threat of imprisonment, court cases, and even enslavement. The threat of debt and loans and to

be in the state of poverty may force persons to fall into the sins of stealing, prostitution, adultery, fraud, crime, and murder.

The Bible is still the only book available to us that can teach us best how to manage our finances and how to solve our financial problems. The teachers of the Bible should be experts on topics that deal with finances and offer advice and solutions to financial problems and show the people the way out of troubles due to financial mismanagement, in the light of God's Word.

In the above true incident, we have this poor widow and her two sons threatened to be taken as slaves by the creditors. But God intervened and solved their problem. From the above passage, we can learn certain principles of how God would provide our needs and what the church can do to counsel and to give advice to the people to be set free from sin and from suffering.

***I. Never be in debt:*** Even though the husband of the widow was a prophet and a man who feared God, he did not do well when he borrowed money and put his family and his children in danger. God's Word warns us not to do certain things that will bring harm to our lives. The promise of God is this, ***“I And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: 12 The LORD shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow.” (Deuteronomy 28:1,12 KJV)*** God's Word declared, ***“and thou shalt not borrow.”*** If we disobey the commands of God, we will find ourselves in debt and forced to borrow over and over again.

The husband of that widow might have borrowed in order to help God's people and to provide for them. The widow said to Elisha, ***“and thou knowest that thy servant did fear the LORD.” (2 King 4:1 KJV)*** And some suggest that the husband of this widow was Obadiah who had taken a hundred prophets and hidden them in two caves and had supplied them with food and water. ***“3 And Ahab called Obadiah,***

*which was the governor of his house. (Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly: 4 For it was so, when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the LORD, that Obadiah took an hundred prophets, and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water.)” (1 Kings 18:3-4 KJV)* There are many who believe that they can borrow money or need to borrow in order to help others who are in need. Even this is not justifiable. God will not bless or protect those who do that. It is against God’s will to borrow. If we don’t have loans, then we are free before God and He will not call us to account. I have seen many people in troubles because they had borrowed money in order to help a brother or a sister who was in need.

Biblically, the borrower is a slave to the lender. *“The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.” (Proverbs 22:7 KJV)* *“25 But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. 26 The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.” (Matthew 18:25-26 KJV)*

There are others who stand guarantee for someone who borrows money and pledges themselves to save their friend. But the Bible does not justify that. *“1 My son, if thou be surety for thy friend, if thou hast stricken thy hand with a stranger, 2 Thou art snared with the words of thy mouth, thou art taken with the words of thy mouth. 3 Do this now, my son, and deliver thyself, when thou art come into the hand of thy friend; go, humble thyself, and make sure thy friend. 4 Give not sleep to thine eyes, nor slumber to thine eyelids. 5 Deliver thyself as a roe from the hand of the hunter, and as a bird from the hand of the fowler.” (Proverbs 6:1-5 KJV)*

God will not change His mind and His Word. God does not protect those who become surety for others and stand guarantee for them. The Scripture shows that those who do that lack in wisdom: *“A man void of understanding striketh hands, and becometh surety in the presence of his friend.” (Proverbs 17:18 KJV)* *“Take his garment that is surety for a stranger: and take a pledge of him for a strange woman.” (Proverbs 20:16 KJV)*

Therefore we need to hate what God hates. ***“He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it: and he that hateth suretiship is sure.”*** (*Proverbs 11:15 KJV*) We should not stand guarantee for a strange man and undergo much loss. The hater of such undertakings will be safe.

***II. Express (open up) our financial problem to God and to His church:*** The woman cried to God as she opened up to Elisha, the man of God, her predicament. ***“Now there cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets unto Elisha, saying, Thy servant my husband is dead; and thou knowest that thy servant did fear the LORD: and the creditor is come to take unto him my two sons to be bondmen.”*** (*2 Kings 4:1 KJV*) Transparency between the members and the church leadership is a very important aspect of counseling for God to reach out and help the members. When the woman came to open up her situation to Elisha, she spoke in detail about it. Hiding facts and not opening up as well as giving incorrect or wrong information will delay the church’s understanding of the problem and giving the correct solution.

In the story that we had read from the Bible, Elisha asked the woman, ***“Tell me, what hast thou in the house? And she said, Thine handmaid hath not any thing in the house.”*** (*2 King 4:2 KJV*) She answered him and said that she had nothing in her house because she had used up all that she had got in paying her debts. Probably, every time the creditors had come and asked her to pay her debt, she would have taken one piece of furniture or clothes or precious things and given it to them until the time there was nothing left. Then, she was forced to come to Elisha and open up to him all her problems.

Sad to say, many of the believers are embarrassed and ashamed to open up their financial problems and out of pride, they continue to hide it till they are exploited by the devil. Then they are willing to humble down and open up all the details of their suffering and their troubles. That’s why the church should have ways and means to peep into their finances and keep track of their lifestyle. The church can do that through messages from the Bible, Bible studies sessions, or when people come for counseling.

**III. God's church and His people should always be there to guide and to help those who are in financial problems: "And Elisha said unto her, What shall I do for thee?" (2 Kings 4:2 KJV)** Elisha showed his willingness to intervene and solve the problem of the woman and her two sons. We as a church and people of God need to show concern and care for those who are in trouble. Elisha was a good listener to the widow and understood well her problem. Before we advise the people, we need to listen well to all the details of their problems so that we can discern what the Biblical solution for the people's problem is. We as a church, we as leaders and workers in God's vineyard are responsible to care for other people's life. We should not be afraid to receive people who have financial problems. We need to do the following so we can help others:

1. We need to study the Scripture well so that we can learn new things about managing financial struggles and how to produce money while we continue to live in a godly way.
2. We need to live by the Scriptural standard so that our lives will be a testimony and demonstration for others to see and to follow.
3. We need to share the Scripture with those who are in need to solve their financial problems.
4. We should develop the faith that is based on the Scripture knowing that God will not operate and provide solutions out of the Scripture. Such a view will help us to impart realistic solutions that are based on God's Word.
5. Totally avoid solutions that are not included in God's Word so that people who are counseled will not set bad examples to others to adopt unbiblical solutions for their financial problems.

After Elisha had listened adequately to the woman, he asked her two questions mentioned below:

- A. **"What shall I do for thee?" (2 King 4:2 KJV)** Why did Elisha ask this question? Usually, people when they approach someone for help and advice, come with certain expectations and expect it to be fulfilled. That is why Elisha asked her, **"What shall I do for thee?"** She did not answer this question. So he understood that she had nothing specific in her mind of

what she expected Elisha to do for her. In fact, she expected a solution from the man of God for her problem.

People who come for counseling can fall into two main categories. The first category is those who will tell you their problem and ask you for a solution. The second category of people will come to you with their own solution and expect you to sanction it even if the solution is unscriptural. If their mind is fixed about certain things, then counseling is of no value to them. Such a category will be difficult to work with and help. Their mind needs to be changed first, and then you will be able to penetrate through them and give them the needed instruction. Such kind of people don't want a pastor over them; instead, they want to dictate terms to the pastor. The support they usually seek is financial. Therefore such kind of people is difficult to convince or offer advice to. Such kind of people is like Martha. Martha complained to Jesus about Mary and expected Him to tell Mary to help her. She dictated to Jesus what He should do: ***"40 But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me."*** (Luke 10:40 KJV) We need to rebuke such kind of people, as Jesus rebuked Martha before we expect them to listen to what we tell them. ***"41 And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: 42 But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."*** (Luke 10:41-42 KJV)

The first category of people we spoke about is humble and good listeners to godly advice. As we give them the solution, they will be obedient to apply it and we will be pleased to see how God works on their behalf to solve their problem.

***IV. God helps us from what we have: B. "Tell me, what hast thou in the house? And she said, Thine handmaid hath not any thing in the house, save a pot of oil."*** (2 King 4:2 KJV) Elisha asked her what she had in her house. God will use the things that are in our hands to solve our problems. So we always need to think seriously about what we have and what God has placed in our lives and homes. Solutions are from what we have, and not from the things that we don't have. Usually, when people face problems, they are misled by the thought

that the particular problem has arisen because they lack certain things, but they failed to realize that God has placed in their hands certain things that will help them to solve that problem and make them overcome it. The widow did not have the money to pay, but she had the oil that she could use to make money.

**V. *Never think you have nothing at all:*** The first reply of the widow to the question of Elisha was that she had nothing at all. ***“Thine handmaid hath not any thing in the house.” (2 King 4:2 KJV)*** But later on she realized what she had and said, ***“Save a pot of oil.” (2 King 4:2 KJV)*** We should not look at what we don’t have but at what we have. We should not look to the empty part of the glass but the filled portion. There are many things in our hands that we underestimate the value of, but they are the solutions to our problems. I found that many of the people who come to seek counseling and advice for their financial problems are unable to see the blessings that they have in their lives and the potential resources that the Lord has granted to them.

**VI. *The little of what we have God will be using to solve our problems:*** ***“Save a pot of oil.” (2 King 4:2 KJV)*** It might be little but it is precious and valuable in God’s sight. Little things used properly according to the instructions of God can be great solutions. Little daily cutting of expenses, little jobs, or a little daily, weekly, or monthly saving can bring dramatic changes in our financial status in the days to come. All that is required is the wisdom of God, humility, and the exercise of good stewardship based on Biblical principles. It is no medical science. It is very simple if we trust God and obey Him.

**VII. *We need to give complete instructions:*** ***“3 Then he said, Go, borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbours, even empty vessels; borrow not a few. 4 And when thou art come in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons, and shalt pour out into all those vessels, and thou shalt set aside that which is full.” (2 King 4:3-4 KJV)*** Elisha gave the woman complete step by step instructions that she needed to follow.

- A. ***“Go, borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbours, even empty vessels; borrow not a few” (2 King 4:3 KJV):*** He asked her to go and borrow from her neighbors empty vessels to put



the oil in. This is technically an easy step to do. But it needs humility and willingness to be humiliated as she needs to go and knock each door of all her neighbors and beg them for empty vessels. Her humility was tested with such a step and her good heart and good relationships to all her neighbors were tested. Surely she will not go to her neighbors if she is not in good terms or in peaceful relationships with them. She did not oppose this step and that proved that she is humble and had peaceful relationships with her neighbors. Solutions for financial problems will come true in our lives if we adopt the right attitude. Who can go and ask for empty vessels and is not ashamed of it? From the technical point, it is easy to ask. But if a person thinks what the people will think of him and how he will take it, then it is a difficult matter, especially if he asked to borrow not a few. Elisha, with the wisdom of God, had put the woman under a test. Godly solutions to solve financial problems will always challenge the people to develop and to improve better attitudes in dealing with themselves and in dealing with others.

**B. “*And when thou art come in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons, and shalt pour out into all those vessels, and thou shalt set aside that which is full*” (2 King 4:4 KJV):** Elisha instructed the woman to collect the vessels and then go into her house and shut the door. This instruction has the following application to solve financial problems:

1. ***No second opinion:*** The reason Elisha instructed her to shut the door was to keep her away from seeking a second opinion. Many times, solutions for financial problems are hindered because people seek public opinion, especially from those who are ungodly and are inexperienced in their understanding of the ways of God in dealing with a particular situation.
2. ***Mind your own business:*** The woman had to mind her own business in solving her problem. Family and friends and social gatherings would distract her from focusing on her targets and goals. It would be a waste of her time and

resources. Hard and consistent work is needed to solve financial problems. ***“11 And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; 12 That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.” (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 KJV)***

3. ***Family teamwork is needed:*** The man of God recommended that the whole family needed to be involved in the solution of the problem. Not only manpower is needed to achieve more things, but the whole family must be united to solve the financial problems. Even the children should be aware of the financial struggles of the family so that they will learn from their parents’ experience and faults. Financial trials would destroy families who don’t receive godly advice from the Word of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit, through God’s church. On the other hand, if the church built on God’s principles intervened, then such people can be salvaged, families got united, brought to stable ground, and started to grow to become mature.
4. ***Hints to measure the progress:*** The man of God told her, ***“and thou shalt set aside that which is full” (2 King 4:4 KJV)*** So he gave a scale for her to check her progress in the achievement of her goals to get rid of all her debts. A scale should be given to those who seek help for their financial problems so that they can measure their progress. That will encourage them as they move forward, to apply the instructions given to them more diligently.

***VI. Completely abiding in the instruction: “5 So she went from him, and shut the door upon her and upon her sons, who brought the vessels to her; and she poured out. 6 And it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said unto her son, Bring me yet a vessel. And he said unto her, There is not a vessel more. And the oil stayed.” (2 King 4:5-6 KJV)*** The woman and her two sons perfectly abided by the instruction that was given to them, and we can see clearly that the oil stopped when there were no more vessels available to be filled. From my experience, I found out that those who follow the instruction

of godly counselors in finding a solution to their financial problems will soon get out of their debts while those who are partially obedient to the instruction drag the whole process of finding themselves out of the financial mess. Partial obedience is disobedience.

**VII. Report and follow up:** *“Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest.” (2 King 4: 7 KJV):* After the woman had followed the whole instruction of the man of God, she went back to him and reported all that God had done in her life and the progress she made. She went back to him for further instructions and directions. She was faithful to God and to the man of God who had given her the instruction. Many who found out that God is working in their lives will have the pride and will move away following the independent course to solve their problems. That course might seem fine at that juncture, but in the long run, it will lead to the bounce back and the exacerbation of their financial problem because of lack of wise instruction from people whom God had placed in His church for this purpose.

When the woman came back, the man of God advised her the following: *“Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest.” (2 King 4:7 KJV)*

- A. *“Go, sell the oil.”* This is another test Elisha gave to the woman to prove her humility. To go and sell in the market or go door to door is not easy especially for those who nurture pride. It is humbling.
- B. *“Pay thy debt.” (2 King 4:7 KJV)* Clearance of debts should be given first priority in managing financial problems. Righteous people are keen to pay their debts in order to avoid people’s threats and God’s displeasure.
- C. *“Live thou and thy children of the rest.” (2 King 4:7 KJV)*  
The words of Elisha to the woman assured her that whatever she had at that moment would sustain her and her children for the rest of their lives. Indirectly, he instructed her not to spend lavishly and waste what was left with her. The lesson for us is after we have cleared our debts, we need to practice the quality

of thriftiness to avoid going back to wallowing in the same filth of being in debt.

*The instruction to those who are in debt are as follows:*

***“20 Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in thy latter end.” (Proverbs 19:20 KJV)***

God’s help, in the form of advice and instruction, will come into your lives through the source He planned for you. As God used Elisha to help and instruct the woman of what she needed to do, God will instruct you and will send you His advice that will help you to solve your problem and to secure the future of you and your family.

***Your problem will start to be solved by receiving the right instructions:*** Elisha gave the widow nothing in the form of money or material things, but he gave her God’s step by step instruction. You must understand that the right advice is the key to solving your problem. Do not expect money or material things. What you need is in your hand and the correct instruction to use it is the only thing needed.

God has a good plan for you; to prosper you and not to harm you and to give you hope and future. The problem that you are facing now will be solved by God and the solution that He offers will sustain you for the rest of your lives if you are willing to fully obey God’s Word.

God’s presence in your lives is what you really need. The little oil that was with the widow solved her problem. The oil is symbolic of the presence of the Holy Spirit in your lives. Once you accept Christ, then you are sealed with The Holy Spirit. ***“13 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, 14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.” (Ephesians 1:13-14 KJV)*** When you face trouble, then you need to invite the Holy Spirit and allow Him to work in your lives; you need to listen to Him and obey Him so that He will take you out from your dilemma.

We as a Church of God and servants of God need to and will do the following for you:

- A- We will listen carefully to your financial problem.
- B- We are more than willing to give you the right Biblical advice and what you need to do step by step in a clear way to solve your financial problem.
- C- We will stand firmly by you without being shaken. Elisha did not give her any money nor did he pay her debt but gave her the right advice. Be sure your problem will be solved when you obey the instructions clearly. The widow obeyed the instructions of Elisha and she found herself free from debt and still there was left to help her and sustain her through life.
- D- We encourage you to exercise faith that God will help you and solve your financial problem when you obey God's Word and follow the instructions that we give you.
- E- Offer advice based on Biblical principles relating to financial matters and support you through thick and thin to bring your financial problem to a closure based on Scripture and with your compliance to God's Word.

Reflect on the message and think about it in a way that will help you and direct you to solve your financial problems and take you out of your struggle. I pray that you humble yourself so that you will receive grace and mercy along with a suitable Biblical instruction to help you lead a debt free life.

# Chapter Fifteen

## *The Apostles' Feet*

***“34 Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, 35 And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.” (Acts 4:34-35 KJV)***

From the Scriptures, we learn important things to practice so that we can serve the Lord and His people in a more effective way. The Apostles were the ones responsible for what was going on in the life of the church. Even today, it is right that whatever offerings, tithes or firstfruits are brought to the church, and those who do the apostles' ministry will be the ones to receive it. It is mentioned, ***“And laid them down at the apostles' feet.” (Acts 4:35 KJV)*** They were trustworthy people with a clean heart and clear motive and were not after dishonest gain. That is why it is so important in the life of the church that the leaders of the church need to be honest and transparent about finances.

The purpose of bringing the money to those who do the apostles' ministry is for the following reasons:

- To verify the source of money
- To verify the life of the person who has given the money
- To verify the motive for giving
- To discern the various needs in the life of the church and the members of the church
- To take serious decisions about giving and spending, and for proper budgeting
- To counsel the people and lead them to live in integrity with regard to finances

The term 'apostle's feet' has been repeated in other places in Scripture too. Reading these verses of Scripture will illuminate our minds further to understand the reasons mentioned above.

***“34 Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, 35 And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need. 36 And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, 37 Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.” (Acts 4:34-37 KJV)*** Their sources of income were verified and the lives of people were examined. The selling of their lands and houses and the proceeds of the sale was monitored by the apostles. The money was to be brought to the apostles' feet.

The movement of money inside the church should be monitored carefully by the church leaders. The following event in the book of Acts will show clearly why the money had to be brought to the Apostles' feet:

***“1 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, 2 And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. 3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? 4 Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. 5 And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. 6 And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him. 7 And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. 8 And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much. 9 Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out. 10 Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband. 11 And great fear***

***came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.”***  
***(Acts 5:1-11 KJV)***

*Ananias, with Sapphira*, had the wrong motive in giving. They wanted to be known by others as givers. They gave but not the correct amount. When they brought only part of the money to the apostles’ feet, Peter discerned the sin through the help of the Holy Spirit and faced them and rebuked Ananias and his wife Sapphira. The judgment of God upon them brought the fear of God upon the whole church.

Peter said to Ananias, ***“Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?”*** (Acts 5:3 KJV) So Satan filled the heart of Ananias and prompted him to do that. Even today, Satan tempts people and prompts them to do the same, to be dishonest in money matters. Therefore, laying down finances at the ‘apostles’ feet’ for money matters to be monitored is essential in the church.

There are people in the church who love to help others and give them cash to earn a good name. Some of the others like to help because they pity the people and out of emotions reach out to them. Such offers of help stem from wrong and incorrect motives. There are people who are genuinely in need and there are people who want to give them so that they can boast. That is why Jesus said to those who like to boast, ***“I Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. 2 Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. 3 But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: 4 That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.”*** (Matthew 6:1-4 KJV) Therefore, the church leadership should be there to check out people’s motive. Offers from people who want to give for the sake of boasting or earning a good name should be rejected. The needs of people can be met by the finances the church is collecting rather than by the personal finances of certain people. Jesus did that. He gave some money to the poor from the bag of money that Judas was holding. ***“27 And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said***



*Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly. 28 Now no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him. 29 For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor." (John 13:27-29 KJV) So the apostles at the time of Jesus were giving money to the poor from the bag of money in which they were collecting.*

Some people inside the church receive money from others just by cooking up stories that appeal to the emotions of others and take advantage of them. Either they invent personal stories to extort or in the name of charity, ask for donations. So the church's responsibility should be to protect those cheerful givers from being abused by others. I inform the cheerful givers of our congregations that the church has set aside five percent of the collection to cater to the poor and needy and so they didn't have to worry about giving from their personal finances. We don't allow anyone to give directly from his personal money to the poor and needy. If they want to give, then they need to give it to the church and the church will decide the amount and the recipient to whom the money should go. In this way, the wrong motive of giving and receiving can be exposed, controlled, and gotten rid of.

Even with regard to borrowing money from one another within the church, I have instructed them to do it with the church's knowledge and approval. I have instructed the workers and committed members in the churches that I oversee, that there should be no borrowing or lending without the church's knowledge and approval. This will offer more protection to the finances of the members. The church will evaluate the situation and see if it is a need or not, and will witness the transaction when it is made. In this way, swindlers who use the church to make money will be exposed and controlled.

I have also instructed all my leaders, pastors, workers, and committed members in the churches that I oversee, that before they move or transfer a certain amount of money, say 1000 dollars or more, they need to come and seek advice from the church leaders in order to evaluate the need for that transaction. All the concerns and the needs should be placed and examined and decided upon at the apostles' feet. This is solely for the protection of God's flock.

The central government of the church with the central treasury to monitor the people's lives and worship was instituted in the life of the people of God in the Old Testament through Moses and continued to the New Testament through the apostles.

The following Scriptures stress about the importance of the central government and the central form of the treasury to monitor the lives of the people and their finances.

In the Old Testament:

- A. In the wilderness, ***“1 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 2 Speak unto Aaron, and unto his sons, and unto all the children of Israel, and say unto them; This is the thing which the LORD hath commanded, saying, 3 What man soever there be of the house of Israel, that killeth an ox, or lamb, or goat, in the camp, or that killeth it out of the camp, 4 And bringeth it not unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, to offer an offering unto the LORD before the tabernacle of the LORD; blood shall be imputed unto that man; he hath shed blood; and that man shall be cut off from among his people: 5 To the end that the children of Israel may bring their sacrifices, which they offer in the open field, even that they may bring them unto the LORD, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, unto the priest, and offer them for peace offerings unto the LORD. 6 And the priest shall sprinkle the blood upon the altar of the LORD at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and burn the fat for a sweet savour unto the LORD. 7 And they shall no more offer their sacrifices unto devils, after whom they have gone a whoring. This shall be a statute for ever unto them throughout their generations.” (Leviticus 17:1-7 KJV)*** Those who were offering sacrifices and were not bringing them to the door of the tabernacle were considered offering to devils. God prohibited them from doing that, and they were obliged to bring their sacrifices to the place that He determined, the door of the tabernacle. Those who would not comply will be cut off from among God's people, ***“8 And thou shalt say unto them, Whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the***

*strangers which sojourn among you, that offereth a burnt offering or sacrifice, 9 And bringeth it not unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, to offer it unto the LORD; even that man shall be cut off from among his people.” (Leviticus 17:8-9 KJV)*

- B. In the Promised Land, read *Deuteronomy 12:1-32* on pages 156-158.

In the New Testament:

- A. The apostles' feet. Read *Acts 4:34-37* on Page 319.
- B. The ministry of Apostle Paul. He was called by God to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles and through him God reached many places and planted many churches. Even with such growth, the ministry of Apostle Paul was part and in link with the ministry of the apostles in Jerusalem. Paul endeavored to give the required updates and details of his ministry to the apostles in Jerusalem through personal visits to Jerusalem; that goes along the mind of God to maintain a central government for the church. *“18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. 19 But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.” (Galatians 1:18-19 KJV) “1 Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also. 2 And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that Gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain. 6 But of these who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person:) for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me: 7 But contrariwise, when they saw that the Gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the Gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; 8 (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:) 9 And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision. 10 Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same*

*which I also was forward to do.” (Galatians 2:1-2, 6-10 KJV)*

The Scriptures shows that churches that Paul planted, were financially linked with the apostles in Jerusalem. *“25 But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. 26 For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. 27 It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things. 28 When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain.” (Romans 15:25-28 KJV)*

*“1 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. 2 Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. 3 And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem. 4 And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me.”(1 Corinthians 16:1-4 KJV)*

Paul with this ministry of making contributions to the saints showed that the finances of the churches in Macedonia, Galatia, and the Corinthians were linked with the treasury in Jerusalem.

*“And not that only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and declaration of your ready mind.” (2 Corinthians 8:19 KJV)*

Those who brought the money, not only gave the funds, but they gave other important details regarding the spiritual and financial status of the churches. In return, the apostles in Jerusalem gave further instructions regarding the ministry and finances, *“Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.” (Galatians 2:10 KJV)*

# Chapter Sixteen

## *Saving*

*“33 Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. 34 Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years. 35 And let them gather all the food of those good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities. 36 And that food shall be for store to the land against the seven years of famine, which shall be in the land of Egypt; that the land perish not through the famine.” (Genesis 41:33-36 KJV)*

Genesis 41 offers us good teaching about saving and about the percentage of saving that we need to keep for the future. From the famous story about Pharaoh’s dream and its fulfillment, we can learn good lessons about planning in life especially pertaining to finances and how to live in the wisdom of God so that we have plenty in times of famine and can avoid getting entangled in the web of scarcity. Let us read the whole chapter of Genesis 41 to know how to apply the principles contained in it.

*“1 And it came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed: and, behold, he stood by the river. 2 And, behold, there came up out of the river seven well favoured kine and fatfleshed; and they fed in a meadow. 3 And, behold, seven other kine came up after them out of the river, ill favoured and leanfleshed; and stood by the other kine upon the brink of the river. 4 And the ill favoured and leanfleshed kine did eat up the seven well favoured and fat kine. So Pharaoh awoke. 5 And he slept and dreamed the second time: and, behold, seven ears of corn came up upon one stalk, rank and good. 6 And, behold, seven thin ears and blasted with the east wind sprung up after them. 7 And the seven thin ears devoured the seven rank and full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and, behold, it was a dream. 8 And it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled; and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all the wise men thereof: and Pharaoh told them his dream; but there was none that could interpret them unto Pharaoh. 9 Then spake the chief*

*butler unto Pharaoh, saying, I do remember my faults this day: 10 Pharaoh was wroth with his servants, and put me in ward in the captain of the guard's house, both me and the chief baker: 11 And we dreamed a dream in one night, I and he; we dreamed each man according to the interpretation of his dream. 12 And there was there with us a young man, an Hebrew, servant to the captain of the guard; and we told him, and he interpreted to us our dreams; to each man according to his dream he did interpret. 13 And it came to pass, as he interpreted to us, so it was; me he restored unto mine office, and him he hanged. 14 Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon: and he shaved himself, and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh. 15 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it: and I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it. 16 And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace. 17 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, In my dream, behold, I stood upon the bank of the river: 18 And, behold, there came up out of the river seven kine, fatfleshed and well favoured; and they fed in a meadow: 19 And, behold, seven other kine came up after them, poor and very ill favoured and leanfleshed, such as I never saw in all the land of Egypt for badness: 20 And the lean and the ill favoured kine did eat up the first seven fat kine: 21 And when they had eaten them up, it could not be known that they had eaten them; but they were still ill favoured, as at the beginning. So I awoke. 22 And I saw in my dream, and, behold, seven ears came up in one stalk, full and good: 23 And, behold, seven ears, withered, thin, and blasted with the east wind, sprung up after them: 24 And the thin ears devoured the seven good ears: and I told this unto the magicians; but there was none that could declare it to me. 25 And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, The dream of Pharaoh is one: God hath shewed Pharaoh what he is about to do. 26 The seven good kine are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years: the dream is one. 27 And the seven thin and ill favoured kine that came up after them are seven years; and the seven empty ears blasted with the east wind shall be seven years of famine. 28 This is the thing which I have spoken unto Pharaoh: What God is about to do he sheweth unto Pharaoh. 29 Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt: 30 And there shall arise after them seven years of*

*famine; and all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine shall consume the land; 31 And the plenty shall not be known in the land by reason of that famine following; for it shall be very grievous. 32 And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass. 33 Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. 34 Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years. 35 And let them gather all the food of those good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities. 36 And that food shall be for store to the land against the seven years of famine, which shall be in the land of Egypt; that the land perish not through the famine. 37 And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants. 38 And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is? 39 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art: 40 Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou. 41 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt. 42 And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; 43 And he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt. 44 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt. 45 And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphnathpaaneah; and he gave him to wife Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On. And Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt. 46 And Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt. 47 And in the seven plenteous years the earth brought forth by handfuls. 48 And he gathered up all the food of the seven years, which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities: the food of the field, which was round about every city, laid he up in the same. 49 And Joseph gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very*

*much, until he left numbering; for it was without number. 50 And unto Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, which Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On bare unto him. 51 And Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: For God, said he, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house. 52 And the name of the second called he Ephraim: For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction. 53 And the seven years of plenteousness, that was in the land of Egypt, were ended. 54 And the seven years of dearth began to come, according as Joseph had said: and the dearth was in all lands; but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. 55 And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread: and Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do. 56 And the famine was over all the face of the earth: and Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold unto the Egyptians; and the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt. 57 And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn; because that the famine was so sore in all lands.” (Genesis 41:1-57 KJV)*

Joseph was sent to Egypt when his brothers sold him as a slave. When he reached Egypt, he was bought by one of the officials of Pharaoh who finally made him manage his household. While he was working honestly in that house, the wife of his master fabricated a story against him that he wanted to bed her. That allegation found Joseph in prison. While he was in prison, God bestowed upon him the gift of interpreting dreams which ultimately improved the quality of his life and got him out of prison.

The wisdom and talents that God gives us is to shape our future. Better planning of our lives based on Biblical principles will pave the way for us to serve God fruitfully and live for His purpose more effectively.

Joseph finally found himself standing and serving before Pharaoh: **“Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men.” (Proverbs 22:29 KJV)** Joseph had nothing at that time in his hand, but he was still able to gain authority and riches because he lived wisely and was diligent in his business and holy in His living.



The interpretation that Joseph gave Pharaoh for the two dreams confirmed to him that there would be seven years of plenty when he would have great harvest and income followed by a very severe famine that would make people forget the seven years of plenty. ***“And the plenty shall not be known in the land by reason of that famine following; for it shall be very grievous.” (Genesis 41:31 KJV)*** That explanation was a revelation from God. ***“And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.” (Genesis 41: 16 KJV)***

Joseph also suggested to Pharaoh the strategy to adopt in order to face the famine. First, he explained to him how to handle the seven years of plenty and then the way to handle and deal with the seven years of ravaging famine. Joseph gave him the strategy from God’s Word and revealed to him God’s will with regard to managing the famine. The first lesson we learn from what Joseph suggested to Pharaoh is that saving begins when we have plenty. Successful wise people’s management to the coming famine will be dated from the time they have plenty. Those who start to save when famine begins to raise its head will face utter failure. We need to apply the same strategy as Joseph and that will enable us to face famines in life; before the famine starts, we need to be ready with our saving.

Let us read and understand what Joseph told Pharaoh: ***“33 Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. 34 Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years. 35 And let them gather all the food of those good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities. 36 And that food shall be for store to the land against the seven years of famine, which shall be in the land of Egypt; that the land perish not through the famine.” (Genesis 41:33-36 KJV)***

***I. The need for a wise and discreet leader: “Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt.” (41:33 KJV)*** When the leader of the family or the church leader is wise and discreet, he works conscientiously. He uses time and resource to his advantage, keeping in mind the people dependent on

him. Wise and discreet leaders work for the day and achieve good things for the future. A leader, who has a leaning towards saving, shows true concern and is capable of seeing the future through God's eyes and the Scriptures. A leader who has no concern about saving is neither wise nor concerned about the future.

***II. A body of committed people should be committed to executing such command: "Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years." (41:34 KJV)*** Awareness should be raised on saving and storing as good stewards for all the resources that God has and will give us as a family and as a church, translating that into actual savings and keeping aside to meet the future demands. Every member of the church and every worker needs to be exposed and oriented towards such teachings to avoid the aftermath of bad management of resources. I teach and mobilize all the members and workers with me towards knowing and living this teaching. Circumstances and events have proved the danger of moving in life without Biblical instructions about saving.

Joseph suggested to Pharaoh that he should collect 1/5 of all plenteous years, ***"Take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years." (41:34 KJV)*** That amount is equal to 20% of all the income for all the plenteous years. The blessing of God in the life of the church and in the life of each and every member, worker, or family will go through seasons. Sometimes there is plenty and sometimes there is scarcity. Therefore, we need to use the opportunity and motivate those who are under the blessing to keep saving for the future in order for them to be ready for the time of scarcity.

Joseph had acknowledged his dependency on God to Pharaoh for the revelation of the dream. ***"16 And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace." (Genesis 41:16 KJV)*** He explained the dream carefully to Pharaoh as God had explained it to him. Therefore, we can easily conclude that the solution that Joseph gave to Pharaoh to face the seven years of famine was God's instruction and not Joseph's. It was truly fulfilled in the Scripture. ***"God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace." (Genesis 41:16 KJV)*** It is revealed in the Scriptures below that it was

not Joseph's opinion but God's. ***“25 And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, The dream of Pharaoh is one: God hath shewed Pharaoh what he is about to do.” “28 This is the thing which I have spoken unto Pharaoh: What God is about to do he sheweth unto Pharaoh. 39 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art” (Genesis 41:25, 28, 39 KJV)*** In Genesis chapter 41, it shows clearly to us how much we need to save. We need to save a minimum of 20% of our income. One-fifth of our entire income needs to be put aside as saving. If we obey God today, we shall receive from God ‘an answer of peace’ during the time of famine. But, if we disobey Him and His instructions, we will be swallowed up by famine.

***III. Places need to be prepared for the store: “And let them gather all the food of those good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities.” (41:35 KJV)***

At that time, they stored grain in silos to keep it intact for a long period of time. During the seven years of plenty, grains were stored in this way and it served the purpose during the seven years of famine. The amount that was collected in the first year was to be consumed in the eighth year, and the amount that was collected in the seventh year was to be eaten in the fourteenth year. Today we need to and can save our income in the form of cash in banks and in a suitable currency that is stable and/or well recognized all over the world. We need to avoid changing from one currency to another to avoid loss during the exchange process.

Money needs to be saved in banks in the form of fixed deposits over a period of time so we can get some interest from them. Moreover, since it is a fixed deposit account, we will not have easy access to the money and this can prevent us from easily falling into the temptation of withdrawing money and spending it.

I teach my disciples and workers to save in banks, and whenever they get a good amount, I instruct them to put it into time deposit schemes.

***IV. Prepare strategic reserve: “And that food shall be for store to the land against the seven years of famine, which shall be in the land of Egypt; that the land perish not through the famine.” (41:36 KJV)***

In terms of stable financial status we need to have the following categories of resources:

- **Category 1:** We need to have a regular amount of money for daily living.
- **Category 2:** We need to have a regular amount of money to deal with urgent situations and states of emergency that arise in life.
- **Category 3:** We need to have a good amount of money on hand as a reserve for the future. This we can call as the strategic reserve that will be used so that the families and the church will not perish during the time of severe famine.

All the members, workers, and families in the church, as well as the church treasury, should be trained and be prepared so that they have all the three categories of resources.

When Joseph explained to Pharaoh the dreams and gave him the instruction of what to do, Pharaoh humbled himself. ***“And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants.”*** (Genesis 41:37 KJV) The solution for all our financial problems is to be humble and have the willingness to accept the instructions that come from God’s Word. One of the difficult teachings that I have introduced to the Church of God is the teaching on saving. The reason behind it is that it requires people to be humble, submit to discipline, and to keep away from indulging in worldly pleasures and from following traditional practices. It will prove to be very beneficial to the people and the church in the days of famine allowed by God to test and justly judge our stewardships. Truly Pharaoh and the people with him humbled themselves. In fact, they not only appreciated the idea and its application, but they also appreciated and valued Joseph who instructed them what to do. ***“38 And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is? 39 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art.”*** (Genesis 41:38-39 KJV) Pharaoh recognized that Joseph had the Spirit of God, based on the advice and instruction that they received from him, that he received a revelation directly from God. When I speak to people about saving, they ask me, *“Is this what really God wants us to do?”*

The truth is this: when pride and worldliness consume the people and when their selfish desire prevails, they are not willing to deny themselves and the things they want to do. Pharaoh was willing to humble down and was willing to give up worldly pleasures to be able to save one fifth (1/5) of the income of food. Today, the people of God strongly resist the teaching of saving. Therefore, more famines from God is on its way to consume those who refuse to discipline themselves in order to save. I don't get intimidated by anyone who will scoff at me when I teach about stewardship and lay emphasis on saving. My reason for that is not only because the Scripture teaches us but also because of my experience with people who have faced financial ruin. I have wept many times witnessing families and individuals being swallowed not by crocodiles, lions, or snakes, but by bank loans and credit card debts.

***“40 Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou. 41 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt. 42 And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; 43 And he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt. 44 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.” (Genesis 40:40-44 KJV)*** Pharaoh appointed Joseph in the midst of great honor over all the land of Egypt. This was ordained by God to execute His plan to put the whole land of Egypt under discipline and on the important project of saving. Pharaoh sensed and valued the importance of such a project to his country. Nowadays, many families, many who serve God, and many churches, face famine, and are under the heavy yoke of debts brought upon themselves due to their disobedience of God's Word and lack of planning to save the 1/5 of their income 'during the years of plenty'.

***“And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.” (Genesis 40:44 KJV)*** This great authority vested upon Joseph was an acknowledgment of Pharaoh's appreciation for Joseph's revelation

from God. Pharaoh gave Joseph the free hand over the land of Egypt and that no one should lift up hand or feet without his permission. The savings of the families that constitute the church should be under the observation and the scrutiny of the church leader. He should be the one to approve or stop the use of the strategic reserve. The head of the families should exercise self-control over their finances and learn to control themselves not to touch and use the strategic reserve for each and every person. The development of the strategic reserve will take several years. This we saw in Joseph's case. It took seven years for Joseph to build the strategic reserve for Egypt. Self-control is very much needed starting from the stage of its inception to its maturity.

***“And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphnathpaaneah; and he gave him to wife Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On. And Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt.” (Genesis 41:45 KJV)*** The meaning of Zaphnath-paaneah is *“Treasury of the glorious rest.”* Good budgeting and disciplined spending with appropriate savings of a fifth of our income (1/5) will give us ‘an answer of peace’ from all financial constrains.

Joseph married during the seven years of prosperity. It is good to learn that time of prosperity is the time of settlement and settlement is the best time to start a family. He had two sons from Asenath, his wife during the seven years of famine. ***“50 And unto Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, which Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On bare unto him. 51 And Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: For God, said he, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house. 52 And the name of the second called he Ephraim: For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.” (Genesis 41:50-52 KJV)*** If we know how to handle our finances by abiding by the instructions of God's Word and the teaching and the discipline of the church about saving, then we will be made fruitful in the land that God has placed us in. He will give us forgetfulness of all our previous sufferings. Financial relief will ameliorate our lives.

***“46 And Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt. 47 And in the seven***

*plenteous years the earth brought forth by handfuls. 48 And he gathered up all the food of the seven years, which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities: the food of the field, which was round about every city, laid he up in the same. 49 And Joseph gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left numbering; for it was without number.” (Genesis 41:46-49 KJV)* We can get ideas for developing strategic reserve from the life of Joseph from the points mentioned below:

**1. Diligence from a young age:** When Joseph was just thirty, he started to collect for the strategic reserve. *“And Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt.” (Genesis 41:46 KJV)* We need to teach and train our children and disciples to begin saving from their young age.

**2. Use the opportunity to collect in the time of plenty:** *“And in the seven plenteous years the earth brought forth by handfuls.” (Genesis 41:47KJV)* Many people waste the resources in the time of plenty, without being aware that their resources sooner or later will be exhausted.

**3. Maintain a high level of discipline and show commitment in the task assigned:** Joseph collected a portion of the grain that the earth brought forth for seven long years. *“And he gathered up all the food of the seven years, which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities: the food of the field, which was round about every city, laid he up in the same.” (Genesis 41:48 KJV)* As long as there was plenty, Joseph collected the grain with true commitment and gladness, operating under the wisdom of God.

**4. Exercise perseverance in doing every task in every place that is accessible:** During those seven years, Joseph collected all the excess food in the land of Egypt and stored it in the cities. In every city, he laid up the food from the fields around it. *“And he gathered up all the food of the seven years, which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities: the food of the field, which was round about every city, laid he up in the same.” (Genesis 41:48 KJV)* We need to continue to motivate every member, worker, and family in the church

to adopt that same attitude. In addition to that, in the church treasury, a reserve should be kept.

**5. Never get deceived by times of plenty and stop collecting:** *“And Joseph gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left numbering; for it was without number.” (Genesis 41:49 KJV)* When there was plenty around Joseph and the blessings were overflowing, he was not deceived by the thought, ‘*There is so much, why I should attempt to collect to save?*’ And some will add this statement, ‘*Anyway, it is always there; when I need it, I will take it.*’ Many people will not collect and save because they can see that there is plenty and they will not believe that one day the plenty will go away. Joseph was not deceived with the plenty that he was seeing in front of his eyes in the whole seven years of plenty. I believe that this is one of the most common reasons given by people who do not want to save because there is plenty in front of their eyes, but they are not aware that the plenty simply may vanish from in front of their eyes just overnight.

**“53 And the seven years of plenteousness, that was in the land of Egypt, were ended. 54 And the seven years of dearth began to come, according as Joseph had said: and the dearth was in all lands; but in all the land of Egypt there was bread.” (Genesis 41:53-54 KJV)**

Sooner or later the plenty will cease and God will test every one according to what he did in his stewardship. God would allow famine to come and be severe to see clearly who would have savings. And that happened when God sent the famine at the time of Joseph; in all lands, the famine was evident except in Egypt because Joseph worked hard for seven years. Joseph passed the test in flying colors in the eyes of God, therefore let’s strive to follow in his footsteps so we will also pass the test in flying colors. Those who live in constant discipline and perseverance will be differentiated by God from the wasteful ones through His famines; their good stewardships will speak for them. Injustice, corruption, and wickedness may disallow faithful people from being commended and recognized, but faithfulness in their stewardships will finally overcome all the evil work against them.

**“And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread: and Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go**



***unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do.” (Genesis 41:55 KJV)*** Joseph certainly stood out in the crowd when the famine came upon the land of Egypt. Pharaoh directed all the people who came to him during the famine to go to Joseph and to do what he told them to do. Not only those who are good stewards will truly be honored and will be most sought after in time of scarcity, but also they will be a source of relief to others who have nothing to eat. God will allow hardships and trials to pass on all people; the unfaithful will be caught with their dishonest stewardships, but the faithful stewards will glow and shine. Hence, let us understand that there is no escape from hardships and trials but it is your grit, tenacity to save, and perseverance clasped with God’s wisdom that will see you through.

***“And the famine was over all the face of the earth: and Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold unto the Egyptians; and the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt.” (Genesis 41:56 KJV)*** Joseph sold to the Egyptians what he had kept in reserve in the storehouses. So he received a payment for the grain he sold. So here we can see that Joseph did not lose what he saved for nothing, but he replaced them with money. Those who save and store will not incur a loss during times of scarcity, instead, they will receive a resourceful income. Joseph was a source of blessing to the whole land of Egypt and he was a big help to the people in times of severe scarcity and we must also be the same. Those who think to save are highly responsible people who can help other people around them, as Joseph helped the Egyptians.

***“And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn; because that the famine was so sore in all lands.” (Genesis 41:57 KJV)*** Not only Egypt benefitted from God’s great project that He had initiated through Joseph, a man of diligence and discipline, but also other nations benefitted. The church that keeps savings and also teaches members and the families to do the same will soon extend her influence to other nations.

***“1 Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said unto his sons, Why do ye look one upon another? 2 And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live, and not die.”***

*(Genesis 42:1-2 KJV)* The family of Jacob moved towards Egypt due to the famine in Canaan and the availability of food in Egypt, thanks to Joseph for his wise stewardship. This event resulted in the reunion of Joseph with his brothers and particularly his brother Benjamin and Jacob his father. All of them came to live in the land of Egypt upon the invitation of Joseph to share in ‘the plenty’ in the midst of famine. So we can conclude that saving may also be instrumental in rebuilding families and uniting them.

***V. Initiatives to go into making a strategic reserve: “Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years.” (41:34 KJV)***

Nowhere else in the Scriptures except in the story of Joseph is it mentioned that a fifth of the income (20%) has to be saved. When Joseph faced Pharaoh with the truth that he needed to save one-fifth of all the income of Egypt, that figure appeared reasonable to Pharaoh as well as to Joseph. Joseph must have certainly noticed Pharaoh’s extravagant life yet they found it a reasonable proposition. Food, clothes, accommodation, furniture, appliances, transportation, communication of various types, education at various levels, health and medical care, insurance, taxes, and government fees are all important in life today. But even among these, there are some more important things than others. If the less important things are kept away from the list of expenses, and the more important things are attended to with discretion, then it will be easy to save 20 percent of the yearly or monthly income.

The question that would always be asked is “How to save?” Disciplining ourselves is the first and the most important step towards saving. If we don’t follow the outline of the Scripture that teaches us how to avoid unnecessary expenses, then we will not be able to save. We can eat well, dress well, live well, get educated well, communicate well, and do all the rest of the things with the following guidelines:

***A. Repent of boastfulness:*** King Solomon made a great throne for him to sit down, ***“18 Moreover the king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with the best gold. 19 The throne had six steps, and the top of the throne was round behind: and there were stays on either side on the place of the seat, and two lions stood beside the stays.***

**20 And twelve lions stood there on the one side and on the other upon the six steps: there was not the like made in any kingdom. 21 And all king Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold, and all the vessels of the house of the forest of Lebanon were of pure gold; none were of silver: it was nothing accounted of in the days of Solomon.” (1 Kings 10:18-21 KJV)** If a person, or the church, wants to buy something that causes them to use the money in their strategic reserve, they will have to deny themselves and make do with something less expensive that is sufficient to satisfy the need. If what King Solomon had spent on that throne was the 20% that he needed to save, then it could be considered as being truly extravagant. We need to be careful in accepting or undertaking a project or projects that will cripple our finances and put us in debt which will take a considerable amount of time in our lives to clear. Now if we behave out of order and do as Solomon did and spent all that for a mere chair to sit on, then that is showing off and boasting.

**“And all the drinking vessels of king Solomon were of gold, and all the vessels of the house of the forest of Lebanon were of pure gold: none were of silver; it was not any thing accounted of in the days of Solomon.” (2 Chronicles 9:20)** Solomon’s utensils were made of gold. Was that really necessary? Wasn’t it mere boastfulness and extravagance? We might squander away what is in our hands on expensive cars, clothes, shoes, mobiles, gold jewels, restaurants, trips and unnecessary journeys, vacations, expensive hotels and so on, just to show off. Will anything good come out of that? Think about it.

**B. Avoid extravagant projects and building expensive houses: “37 In the fourth year was the foundation of the house of the LORD laid, in the month Zif: 38 And in the eleventh year, in the month Bul, which is the eighth month, was the house finished throughout all the parts thereof, and according to all the fashion of it. So was he seven years in building it.” (1 King 6:37-38 KJV) “But Solomon was building his own house thirteen years, and he finished all his house.” (1 King 7:1 KJV)** Solomon spent more time on building his own palaces (13 years) than on building the house of God (7 years). Many people nowadays spend much time, effort, and money to build or buy houses that they don’t live in. It is not wrong to build or buy a house, but if we just buy or build to rent it or for someone else to live

in it, then it is a waste especially when we have to clear the debt that was taken to build it. Also, it is very inappropriate to use what we own of states (houses) in times of emergency. If we are in urgent need of money, we cannot sell the property with the house quickly. Even if we sell it, we may not be able to get the amount of money that we need or get back the amount we spent on it. If we need to buy or build a house to live in immediately, then it is worth venturing into this project but we must have ready finances for it.

***C. Quit spending on friends or people just because they admire us:*** King Solomon spent much on the Queen of Sheba. ***“And king Solomon gave unto the queen of Sheba all her desire, whatsoever she asked, beside that which Solomon gave her of his royal bounty. So she turned and went to her own country, she and her servants.” (1 Kings 10:13 KJV)*** ***“And king Solomon gave to the queen of Sheba all her desire, whatsoever she asked, beside that which she had brought unto the king. So she turned, and went away to her own land, she and her servants.” (2 Chronicles 9:12 KJV)*** He gave her much more than what she had given him. Why did he do that? It was his pride. We do the same and spend lavishly on people or friends unnecessarily, just because they feed our pride. We give them gifts and treat some people well in order to gain their favor and their approval.

***“He that oppresseth the poor to increase his riches, and he that giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want.” (Proverbs 22:16 KJV)***  
***“One who oppresses the poor to increase his wealth and one who gives gifts to the rich—both come to poverty.” (Proverbs 22:16 NIV)***  
Here in this proverb, ‘want’ or ‘poverty’ results when we resort to the two things mentioned below: *First*, when we oppress the poor and take advantage of them, without paying them their wages. *Second*, when we give gifts to rich people. We give gifts to earn their favor and approval. We trust them to help us more than God, therefore when we do these things, we are igniting God’s anger and we will be visited by poverty and lose out on God’s providence. We don’t need to spend on rich people or give them gifts. When we do that, then we are wasting resources and that will contribute to our poverty. When we do behave like that, God will not reward us for such wasting.

Some people use their money to make friends so that later on those friends will help them. But that is cheating and shows lack of faith in God. *Proverbs 19:4 NIV* says, **“Wealth attracts many friends, but even the closest friend of the poor person deserts them.”** **“Wealth maketh many friends; but the poor is separated from his neighbour.”** (*Proverbs 19:4 KJV*) If you use your money to make friends in order for you to further your own plans, then just be sure that your money will disappear. **“Many curry favor with a ruler, and everyone is the friend of one who gives gifts.”** (*Proverbs 19:6 NIV*) **“Many will intreat the favour of the prince: and every man is a friend to him that giveth gifts.”** (*Proverbs 19:6 KJV*) People will befriend those who give gifts. But people who give gifts (food, money, flowers) must realize that their money will not remain with them. They are wasting their money. Instead, poverty will keep them company.

The Lord has placed in our hands many riches and blessings and it is up to us either to squander it on ourselves and ruin our lives and our descendants and disciples, or cherish and appreciate what the Lord has placed in our hands and be a good steward; in this way we will ensure that our lives and the life of our disciples and our children after us is secure.

It made sense to Pharaoh when Joseph told him to save 20 percent of the whole year’s income of Egypt; There was no doubt that he had led a pompous life and indulged in extravagance, but he humbled himself before Joseph and the Word of God that he had received through the interpretation of his own dream.

***D. Using free resources: “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” (Isaiah 55:1 KJV)*** This is an invitation from the Lord to use the resources that are freely available in nature and through various privileges and services in life. There is free food, water, electricity, internet, telephones, transport, fruit, vegetables, and other items. As long as they are from the Lord, we can use them as free resources. This will facilitate us to save a large portion of our income for the future.

***E. Not spending on unnecessary things:*** “Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.” (Isaiah 55:2 KJV) Isaiah is recommending that we spend money on essentials and not on useless things that cause harm. For example, you need to buy milk for babies and children because milk is essential. But we do not need to spend on soft drinks because they are not essentials. We need to spend on rice, bread, vegetables, and meat but we do not need to spend on chocolates, chips, and sweets.

We need to cut unnecessary expenses so that we can save and have more money to reach new areas with the Gospel. We need to avoid unnecessary things, like makeup, jewels, gold, accessories, and perfumes. But toothpaste and toothbrush, certain deodorants, aftershave, certain creams, and lotions are essential, but the rest we should eliminate from our list. We do not need to wear and use branded things because there is a heavy price tag attached to them. As long as even simple, inexpensive things serve the purpose, we need to use them so that we can save the rest of the money to reach the lost.

We must avoid spending on some things even if they don't cost much but they are not essentials, because, over a period of time, they will drain our financial source. A can of soft drink that will cost us about 35 cents in a day will cost 127.75 dollars over a year. Over ten years, it will be 1277.5 Dollars. Get on four people in the house; over ten years they need to spend 5110 dollars just for soft drinks. With 5110 dollars, a car can be bought to help in ministry. The same can be applied to candies, chewing gums, etc. When we do that regularly, then that will affect our budget. Simple things that we are not aware of can let wealth to go away from us. We can spend about 2-5 dollars and bless someone with a Bible which is the most essential and priceless gift. Hence, let's be wise and discern the essential from the non-essential.

***F. Let nothing be wasted:*** Avoid wastage of any kind. This principle is implied in ***John 6***. Jesus gave them the following instruction: “When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, ***Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.***” (John 6:12 KJV) The Lord said, “***that nothing be lost.***” The disciples did not throw anything

away. If we waste our resources (water, electricity, bread, food, etc.) then we cannot keep wealth. Misuse of resources can take wealth away from us and from our children in the future but proper use can be a blessing to people. A good percentage of people eat the food on the first day, but on the second day will not eat the left over and they will just throw it. This food had caused time, effort, and money to prepare. If we waste every day a dollar for that food that we are throwing, then over one year we are wasting 365 dollars, and over ten years then we will be losing 3650 dollars. Simple things that we are not aware of can cost us much money. We learn this from the Word of God through the Words of Jesus. He satisfied the crowd with bread and fish, not with 3 or 4 items, and the remaining was stock for another day. What a wonderful lesson!

*Why do we need to save?* The following Scripture will provide the answer:

***A. “The rich man's wealth is his strong city: the destruction of the poor is their poverty.” (Proverbs 10:15 KJV):*** Some people do not have in their mind to save, and they will spend all that they receive, and when they have an emergency in their lives, they will fall into poverty and they will be in need. When we do not have in our vocabulary the word ‘saving’ then we will be the victim of debt. Unwise spending and unwillingness to save will bring ruin into our lives in the form of debts, bank loans, and bankruptcy and we will be left high and dry in emergency situations, with nothing to lean on.

***The rich man's wealth is his strong city:*** Riches are like a fortified city. It comes to our aid in times of trouble. Serving the Lord with our spiritual gifts is certainly an asset, but if we have material wealth, we can spend and pay for all the expenses of the ministry. Even better is wealth along with spiritual gifts. It is not the money that will bring the Gospel but the Holy Spirit uses material things to sustain those whom He uses to bring the Gospel. And the Holy Spirit today directs us and teaches us to save and be good stewards.

***The destruction of the poor is their poverty:*** Poverty is what cripples people and makes them vulnerable to many hazards including sicknesses, oppression, injustice, and abuse. Poverty is not a sin, but

when it preys on people due to wrong stewardships, then it is a sin and it becomes a foothold for other dangerous sins to crawl into your lives and cause ruin.

**B. “The crown of the wise is their riches: but the foolishness of fools is folly.” (Proverbs 14:24 KJV):** *The crown of the wise is their riches:* The wise and godly will benefit from their wealth. It will prove to be an asset to them. The Bible wants us to act wisely with regard to money and need to accumulate wealth for a godly purpose. Abraham was rich, David was rich, Isaac was rich, Solomon was rich, and their riches were used for the glory of God. David collected large amounts of treasures and kept them for his son Solomon to build the temple of God. So the wealth and the ability that God has given us to make wealth should be used for God’s purpose and for His glory, to build His church.

**But the foolishness of fools is folly:** Those who do not have savings but have squandered away their wealth are fools, sinners, and totally wicked because they were reluctant to make wealth; they have opposed the purpose of God in their lives and had been bad stewards.

**C. “A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children: and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just.” (Proverbs 13:22 KJV):** David saved for his son Solomon to build the temple of God. We need to leave an inheritance for our children, who are the next generation, to aid them to take the Gospel to others. As we endeavor to save, our children and disciples who will lead the church in the future will have adequate resources to manage the fields and will continue the mission work of God that He started, until His return. We have to teach them to do the same thing so that this trend will continue in the generations to come.

**“14 Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.” (2 Corinthians 12:14 KJV)** Paul told the Corinthians that he was not seeking after the material things that they had. He also declared to them clearly that the children should not save for their parents but parents should save for their children. But nowadays in many cases,



the opposite is going on; parents are not leaving any inheritance or any material things for their children, instead, the children are contributing and supporting their parents. Furthermore, some parents are waiting for their children to work in order to be supported by them and this is opposite to what the Scriptures say.

**D. “He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor.” (Proverbs 22:9 KJV):** It says here that the person who has a bountiful eye that comes from a bountiful heart will be blessed because he gives his bread to the poor. Therefore, we need to save, so that we can share with the poor and further be blessed. If we are poor, then we cannot share and we will not be a blessing either to ourselves or to others.

It is not shameful to be poor, but it is shameful and sinful if we don't know how to come out from poverty, manage our lives according to God's will, and learn to save and make wealth according to Scriptural principles. Therefore, in our endeavor to help the poor, we need to teach them how to ultimately come out of poverty and start to help others.

We give alms to help the poor because we love God and we love our neighbors. Jesus recommends us to give alms and to help those in need. He promised us a reward from God the Father when we do it out of a good heart, **“That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.” (Matthew 6:4 KJV)**

The giving of alms is a great duty and a duty which all the Disciples of Christ, according to their ability, must abound in. Giving alms is righteousness, **“He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor; his righteousness endureth for ever; his horn shall be exalted with honour.” (Psalm 112:9 KJV)** **“Treasures of wickedness profit nothing: but righteousness delivereth from death.” (Proverbs 10:2 KJV)** That which is given to the poor is their due, **“Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it.” (Proverbs 3:27 KJV)**

It is true that our alms would not make us deserve to go to Heaven, but it is true that we cannot go to Heaven without them. It is pure religion, ***“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world. (James 1:27 KJV)***

Alms further can do to us the following:

1. ***Reward us in temporal things with plenty: “24 There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. 25 The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.” (Proverbs 11:24-25 KJV) “He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.” (Proverbs 19:17 KJV)***
2. ***Security from want: “He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack: but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse.” (Proverbs 28:27 KJV) “The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again: but the righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth.” (Psalm 37:21 KJV) “I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.” (Psalm 37:25 KJV)***
3. ***Relief from distress: “1 Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble. 2 The LORD will preserve him, and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth: and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies.” (Psalm 41:1-2 KJV)***
4. ***Honour and a good name: “He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor; his righteousness endureth for ever; his horn shall be exalted with honour.” (Psalm 112:9 KJV)***
5. ***Recompensation in the resurrection of the just with eternal riches, “And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.” (Luke 14:14 KJV)***

***How do we save money or keep the money?*** Some people think that only those who have a large income, a good job, a distinguished profession, or high salary can save money or have wealth. That is not correct. We need to know that even those who have low income and low paying menial jobs can still save money if we do the following:

- A. work hard
- B. be honest and sincere
- C. tithe correctly and giving what is due to God
- D. practice thriftiness,
- E. exercise discipline in money matters; using free resources and spending only on the necessary and important things.
- F. live in holiness
- G. be persistent in saving

***“Dishonest money dwindles away, but whoever gathers money little by little makes it grow.” (Proverbs 13:11 KJV)*** We learn from Proverbs to live in holiness and to gather money, not necessarily in bulk, but little by little until this becomes much. Let’s follow all the principles and methods of saving that has been mentioned in this book. Let’s also exercise discipline in money matters to conserve wealth to be used for the sustenance of our families, the church and for the extension of God’s kingdom.

***“He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man: he that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich.” (Proverbs 21:17 KJV)*** Few more things than what is mentioned in the above verse make us poor: loving pleasure, indulging in sin, wasting money, drinking wine, enjoying worldliness, eating expensive food, and so on. All these will make us poor. Moreover, the Bible says, ***“For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” (Romans 14:17 KJV)*** The Kingdom of God is praying and fasting not feasting or getting involved in parties.

Nowadays, churches have become socializing centers where money is spent unwisely and lavishly for arranging get-togethers, parties, and celebrations to carry people’s favor and approval. Remember, poverty will knock on the door of such churches and God’s work will come to a standstill. For example, if every week we have a party, then how

much money will we be spending on food, dresses, preparations, and gifts? That all cost money, and if we multiply it for one year then how much? For example, if we spend 50 dollars for ten people, for food in a small party in a week then per year it will add up to 2600 dollars; then per ten years, it will be 26000 dollars. Simple things that cause little money, on a long term will cost us much. Instead of saving that amount of money we may end up into debt. Poverty will come into our lives because we did not save this amount of money to be used later on for God's glory.

Let's not send money down the drain but use it for the right purpose. We must know how to discipline ourselves and refrain from wasting this precious resource that can be used to transform lives.

There are many things that we do unnecessarily that will hinder us from saving; doing parties and celebrations, eating in the restaurants, giving gifts, using taxis and expensive transport, not using public transport and buses, eating readymade food and not cooking with our hands, eating expensive food, buying things we do not need, traveling and sightseeing tours and holidaying, fines and penalties because of carelessness; these are all heavy expenses and money consumers and things that hinder us from saving. They are the very things that take the savings away. The point here is that if it is not in our mind to save and we are not taking it seriously, then we will not be able to save. For example, I put the following in my mind: *'I do not need to practice giving gifts because I do not have money to put in this direction.'* Another example, *'I don't practice eating in restaurants so that my money will not go into this direction, so I can have some money that I can share; I can give Bibles that I can reach the lost with, and I can help those who are in need in certain emergencies.'*

Living wisely and abiding by the will of God and the Word of God will certainly enable us to amass wealth which would be a great resource for winning souls and preparing them to enjoy eternal life for the glory of God and the extension of His Kingdom on earth.

***“15 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. 16 For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of***

*life—comes not from the Father but from the world. 17 The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.” (1 John 2:15-17 KJV)* Strict discipline starts from the heart of man. No one can force anyone to be changed unless the person decides to do that. The decision comes from within. Our mind needs to be renewed and transformed that it will no longer love worldly things so our finances will not be wasted on things that are sinful, worldly, and unnecessary. Expensive food, parties, giving and exchanging gifts, trips, sightseeing, and tours that without purpose are not the love of God but are all worldliness. Our worldliness will suck and exhaust all our financial resources. And when we are really in need and need to spend, then we will find ourselves without money - that is not the love of God! We need to fix our thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. We need to think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise and order our lives accordingly.

The church should be a model in the area of wise and careful spending, for the world and the new believers and the new disciples to emulate. The church should stand firm and not encourage and honor activities that don't glorify God. Parties and celebrations that the Word of God does not ordain are full of boasting, gossiping, envy, showing off, worldliness, and the loss of financial resources and poverty.

In *Luke 14* Jesus was invited to a banquet, and this is how He admonished the person who had invited him, ***“Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee.” (Luke 14:12 KJV)*** So if Jesus is saying, ***call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours;*** Who is left to be invited? Almost no one! So in other words, what Jesus means is that we must stop all these parties and stop entertaining people who will be able to reciprocate. The focus of such get togethers is on people rather than on God. This is a worldly practice. The church must refrain from such practices so that people can grasp the differences between living for Christ and living for people. In certain instances, pastors and churches are hardly going into fasting because of the booking of many parties. They are having feasting and no

fasting; their God had become their belly! Churches must encourage and invite people for fasting and prayer and offer them spiritual food that will sustain them for life rather than splurge money on perishable food that will come out as waste.

Jesus further explained, ***“But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind.”*** (Luke 14:13 KJV) Now the kind of people Jesus is speaking about in the verse above will not accept our invitation and so we need to go to them. The poor are not only those who do not have money. They are those who do not have the Word of God. The lame and the crippled are those who are in trouble and are in need of God’s word. We need to go to them and for this ministry we need resources. Hence, there is a great need to be a good steward and be recipients of God’s blessing; to make wealth so that we can spend on God’s work and mission, and we will be recompensed when we meet Him face to face. ***“And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.”*** (Luke 14:14 KJV) The will of God for us is to make wealth to reach the lost, to help the saints and to help those who are in need. God truly wants us to serve His purpose in such a manner.

Now for a quick run through of how we can save:

**A. Put it in our minds:** It was not in Pharaoh’s mind to save, but Joseph showed him the way. Pharaoh listened to Joseph and obeyed God’s instruction. We need to do the same, to humble down and start to cut down our costs and start to save.

**B. Discipline ourselves:** For sure Joseph was aware of the extravagant lifestyle of Pharaoh but he took the initiative to educate him on saving for the lean period. So also we need to be educated in God’s principles relating to stewardship, saving, and preparing for the days of famine. We should not forget, that eating in the restaurants, eating expensive food, buying many unnecessary things and accessories, every now and then, changing our computers, our laptops, and our mobiles all need money. We should not say it is a small amount. Small amounts put together will become a big amount. A dollar per day over seven years will be 2520 dollars; it can be used to buy a car. If that one dollar per day can do so much, how much more if we waste 10 dollars daily?

**C. Collect little by little:** 20% of our income should be kept as savings.

**D. Replace bad habits with good habits:** Stop offering material gifts to people; instead offer them the most priceless gift, the gift of God's Word. Stop wasting resources on useless things and start saving to enjoy the blessing as well as be a blessing unto others; spend money on good projects, like the good Samaritan, by reaching out to the poor and needy, the orphans and the widows, the sick, the imprisoned, the downcast and trodden who need the Gospel to salvage their lives.

**E. Keep in focus the purpose of saving:** What we save should not be used without discretion for the wrong purpose. That is why Joseph said to Pharaoh, ***“Take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years. 35 And let them gather all the food of those good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities. 36 And that food shall be for store to the land against the seven years of famine, which shall be in the land of Egypt; that the land perish not through the famine.” (Genesis 41:34-36 KJV)*** Pharaoh was able to see God's wisdom in Joseph's speech and was also aware of his own extravagant lifestyle and realized the need to listen to Joseph's advice. That is why he recommended Joseph to be in charge of amassing the reserve for the lean period. ***“Which shall be in the land of Egypt; that the land perish not through the famine.” (Genesis 41:36 KJV)*** Famine always spells ruin. So here Joseph was telling Pharaoh to cut the cost and save one-fifth of the country's revenue and keep it as reserve. Reserve cannot be touched. When we save, we need to discipline and control ourselves from using what we have kept as a reserve until the opportune moment.

We must understand that we cannot use what we save without discretion. We cannot use our saving to buy and purchase casual things. We cannot use our saving for someone who wants to borrow from us to do certain projects, to build a house, to buy a car, etc. We cannot use our strategic savings for such things because our savings would not be there for the years of famine that is going to come to our lives where in them we will not have an income. The reserve that we have should only be used in the years of famine.

**F. Wisdom and discernment:** Joseph said to Pharaoh, “**33 Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt.**” (*Genesis 41:33*) What we need now is discernment and wisdom of God to be wise as serpents when it comes to saving. Pharaoh appointed Joseph because he was a man who was **discreet and wise** to control the process of saving. Self-control, self-discipline, responsibility, and a mature attitude are all needed in managing our finances today so that we can be ready to face tomorrow. We need to be like Joseph wise and discerning to do the task entrusted to us today as a church to reach out to the whole world with the Gospel of Christ till the Lord comes and take us.

**G. Do not be deceived:** “**And Joseph gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left numbering; for it was without number.**” (*Genesis 41:49 KJV*) We notice here that Joseph continued to collect and save even when he had a great quantity. The point here is that Joseph was not deceived by the huge quantity of the gathered corn he saw, because he knew that the famine was just around the corner and he needed to save and store in accordance with God’s Word. In the same way, we should rise above every kind of deception and continue to obey God’s Word and His principles regarding saving resources and wise spending. Then, we will be able to cope with the famine to come.

**H. Take warning from the Scriptures:** “**27 And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. 28 And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. 29 Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: 30 Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.**” (*Acts 11:27-30 KJV*) God allowed famine not only in the Old Testament time but also in the New Testament period. The church in the book of Acts had faced famine. The same may happen to the church today. That is why the church must insist on saving resources. In *Acts 11:27-30* a prophet prophesied and warned the church about the coming famine. The message in our hand is a prophetic one, warning the church of today to repent and stop squandering God’s resources as the lost son in wild living; parties, traveling here and there, undertaking unnecessary projects, worldliness,



religious tours to the land of Israel and so on. The church and we who are reading must understand that God would allow famine to come across the life of the church and the famine will be severe and will spread over the entire world. So we need to take warning and repent. As the Lord's second coming is near, famines, wars, and earthquakes will also be there and will compound the severity of the suffering that God would allow. So now we as a church need to be wiser in managing and adjusting our finances. Are we ready to combat these things?

The Lord wants us to use our minds in living our lives for Him. ***“28 For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? 29 Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, 30 Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.” (Luke 14:28-30 KJV)*** So as disciples, we need to undertake big projects for God. We need to be builders and for that, we need money and finances and that is why Jesus said we need to sit down and count the cost with the wisdom of God. We need to sit down and count how much we need to save for the coming project. Once we venture on something, there should be no shortage of resource.

Some will say God will provide in times of famine. Yes, He will provide, and one way He provides is through what we have today. We need to be like the ants gathering food during the harvest. God may send at once when we are in need. But God will certainly hold us accountable for the amount of money, time and resources that we had not used wisely. In certain situations, unexpectedly the Lord may want us to go on a certain mission. God may provide for us through someone who is a good steward for God. God used the Magi to support Jesus' parents' trip to Egypt, ***“And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. ” (Matthew 2:11 KJV)*** Those were the Magi who came from the East and presented their gifts to the Lord, and those gifts were important because Joseph and Mary were called in ***Matthew 2:13*** to take Jesus and go to Egypt. They must have used the gifts from the

Magi to finance their trip to Egypt and accomplish their mission there. ***“And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.”*** (Matthew 2:13 KJV) The Magi were true worshippers of God and they were good stewards of God’s resources and the church (Joseph and Mary) used what they had given to take Jesus to Egypt. Stewardship is very important; if someone among God’s children has given us a gift today, then there is a purpose and a mission. Therefore we need to use what we receive for His glory.

***“Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings.”*** (Acts 24:17 KJV) Paul mentioned that he went to Jerusalem to bring gifts for the poor. The poor there were the apostles of the Lord passing through famine. Paul was collecting from the churches for them. The point here is how Paul or we today as a church can collect or give to help the poor or those in famine if there is no saving that has been set aside. So how can we help the saints and the churches that are in need of finance if we ourselves have no savings of what God has given to us? In Acts 24:17 Paul brought gifts to help those who faced famine and were in need. The same theme we can read in 1 Corinthians 16:1-4 ***“I Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. 2 Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. 3 And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem. 4 And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me”*** So here Paul mentions that money should be collected beforehand so that once he reaches, then the money will be sent to help the Lord’s people in Jerusalem. Now the practice of the churches today to collect money on the urge of the moment for a particular need is not Biblical. They resort to that because they have no reserve. God’s church should be wise, alert, and smart in keeping reserves to face all odds.

God gives us His Word for us to apply it in our lives. When the apostles of the Lord had to face famine, why not we living in this age

and time will face the same? The Scripture is the Word of God to warn us because history can repeat itself.

Paul said in *Acts 20:35 KJV* “**35 I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.**” The Word of God is crystal clear. We have a responsibility. The Biblical principle of making wealth is to be shared with those who are in need and can also be used to replenish us in times of need.

**“19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”** (*Matthew 28:19-20 KJV*) To go and make disciples, we need money to spend on our journeys and to give to those in need. That is why we need to save because we need to travel to give the Word of God to the lost, to give Bibles, clothes and food and medical help to those who are in need, to help churches and workers, to help widows and orphans, prisoners, and sick people who are in need; that is the part of the Great Commission.

*James 1:27 KJV* says, “**Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.**” We need to save so that we can care and spend on orphans and widows and the rest of the population of people who are in need. *James 1:27 KJV* gives a very valid point about how we can save: “**And to keep himself unspotted from the world.**” Worldliness and a worldly life will push us to spend our money on pleasures and on unnecessary things and that will hinder us from saving and disable us from pursuing the mission of the Lord.

Some people say that they don't need to save and they will quote: *Matthew 10:9-10 KJV* “**9 Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, 10 Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat.**” And they say Jesus is saying *Provide neither.... for your journey, ...* then they will tell us, ‘Why are you telling us to save and

keep things to be used for the future in the ministry and mission?’ But, let us read, *Luke 22: 35-36* “**35 And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing. 36 Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one.**” (*Luke 22: 35-36 KJV*) What Jesus says here is that there is a time of evil will come and we need to be ready. The people who say, ‘*Do not take with you because He will provide*’ will be proved right only if something far beyond our comprehension and expectations happens. Then He will make a way for us, and He will provide. God is there for us but we also need to be wise and discerning and do our part. God has said in His Word to take and keep; therefore you are required to have your money, to have your transport, to have your savings, your clothes, and food, to have your bags and belongings, to sit down and plan and draw an estimate. In this way, we can be satisfied that we have planned well.

If our mind tells us: ‘*By faith God will provide even if we do not plan or keep or save*’, then that is not correct and not acceptable to God because in this way we are putting God to the test and we are living our lives without wisdom and without discernment like worldly people who spend everything without planning, and with no saving for the future. God wants us to have wealth for a good purpose, and we need to do it in accordance with the Word of God.

My dear brothers and sisters, let us be God-pleasers rather than men-pleasers and follow the principles of stewardship, avoiding unnecessary expenses, avoiding sin and worldliness, trusting God, disciplining ourselves in the way God ordained in His Word and spread the Gospel to all parts of the world even to the next generation.

Let us further explore the Scriptures that will motivate us and teach us to save by highlighting the benefits of saving and its positive outcome:

***“And the famine was over all the face of the earth: and Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold unto the Egyptians; and the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt.”*** (*Genesis 41:56 KJV*) Joseph sold to the Egyptians what he had had as a reserve in the storehouses. So here we can see that Joseph never incurred any loss

but gained money. What we save in the time of plenty will back us up at the time of scarcity and will enable us to use what we had stored to earn an additional income as we can read further from the life of Joseph.

*“13 And there was no bread in all the land; for the famine was very sore, so that the land of Egypt and all the land of Canaan fainted by reason of the famine. 14 And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, for the corn which they bought: and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house. 15 And when money failed in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came unto Joseph, and said, Give us bread: for why should we die in thy presence? for the money faileth. 16 And Joseph said, Give your cattle; and I will give you for your cattle, if money fail. 17 And they brought their cattle unto Joseph: and Joseph gave them bread in exchange for horses, and for the flocks, and for the cattle of the herds, and for the asses: and he fed them with bread for all their cattle for that year. 18 When that year was ended, they came unto him the second year, and said unto him, We will not hide it from my lord, how that our money is spent; my lord also hath our herds of cattle; there is not ought left in the sight of my lord, but our bodies, and our lands: 19 Wherefore shall we die before thine eyes, both we and our land? buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants unto Pharaoh: and give us seed, that we may live, and not die, that the land be not desolate. 20 And Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh; for the Egyptians sold every man his field, because the famine prevailed over them: so the land became Pharaoh's. 21 And as for the people, he removed them to cities from one end of the borders of Egypt even to the other end thereof. 22 Only the land of the priests bought he not; for the priests had a portion assigned them of Pharaoh, and did eat their portion which Pharaoh gave them: wherefore they sold not their lands. 23 Then Joseph said unto the people, Behold, I have bought you this day and your land for Pharaoh: lo, here is seed for you, and ye shall sow the land. 24 And it shall come to pass in the increase, that ye shall give the fifth part unto Pharaoh, and four parts shall be your own, for seed of the field, and for your food, and for them of your households, and for food for your little ones. 25 And they said, Thou hast saved our lives: let us*

*find grace in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants. 26 And Joseph made it a law over the land of Egypt unto this day, that Pharaoh should have the fifth part; except the land of the priests only, which became not Pharaoh's.*" (Genesis 47:13-26 KJV)  
As we read, the stores that Joseph prepared was not consumed but was replaced with money, then with cattle, and then with human power and land. So from the story of Joseph, we can learn further the following things:

**1. Good stewardship will be rewarded:** Good stewardship of what God has entrusted to us will enable us not to lose what we worked for, even in the years of famine. God will reward our good stewardships and will replenish us and will sustain us and our families, churches and our disciples.

**2. Good stewardship will save lives:** The Egyptians said to Joseph "*And they said, Thou hast saved our lives.*" (Genesis 47:25 KJV) Now Jesus is our savior and has taught us in His Word to be good stewards and manage whatever we receive from Him well. If we don't pay heed to God's command and fulfill the task that the Lord has entrusted to us, then we are putting ourselves and others who are under our care in unnecessary trouble.

**3. Good stewardship will adopt the divine principle of saving the one fifth:** What God had revealed to Pharaoh in his dream to save a fifth of all the income of the land was agreed upon in Egypt. "*And Joseph made it a law over the land of Egypt unto this day, that Pharaoh should have the fifth part.*" (Genesis 47:26 KJV) Let us adopt this law of God in our lives and obey it by practicing it and let us see how God will continually bless us. Adopting this law will afford to us relief and comfort, will spare us troubles and will secure stable and financial-free troubles future for us and for our children, our families, our descendants, our disciples, and our churches.

This teaching that we discussed will be a part of reality once we put into practice what we had learned. The future for us and for our children and disciples will be determined by the mind set up that we are keeping today. Jesus said, "*The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and*

***that they might have it more abundantly.” (John 10:10 KJV)*** All that we have discussed is from the Word of God mentioned in the Bible. Jesus is the living Word and when we apply every Word of the Scripture in the right place and at the right time, then we will be blessed and His blessing will flow through us to others. But if we refuse the Word of God as some do and mock it, then it is for our ruin. The devil is a thief who would hate God’s people to apply God’s Word in their lives and find relief. Hence, if we don’t apply God’s Word, we will actually allow the devil to steal, kill, and destroy. Therefore, let’s make the right choice in taking more heed of the message today and apply it carefully in our lives and reap the blessing of God and keep it in the coming future, to the next generation, until Jesus comes.

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# Chapter Seventeen

## *Church Banking*

***“1 We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. 2 Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.” (Romans 15:1-2 KJV)***

The Holy Spirit will always provide the church with certain gifts and ministries that will aid the church and help the members to grow in the proper way and become mature and get perfected.

Along the years of ministry and in ministering to people of low income and who are burdened with various financial needs and constraints, and who are exposed to various temptations, the Lord directed me to initiate a ministry to help those people whom God entrusted to my care. The Lord helped me to help the brethren by introducing the teaching of savings to them and to help them in saving a certain amount of money, on a monthly bases, that they can put aside. I started to do that ten years ago. I initiated this ministry in the following steps:

***I. “19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” (Matthew 28:19-20 KJV)*** I started teaching the new believers in my church as part of discipleship and as part of preparing them to live for God and to serve Him, about finances along with other teachings. For the new disciples, we use this acronym ‘SPEND’ to teach about finances

- S: Save as much as you can.
- P: Pay your tithes and offerings.
- E: Economize yourself.
- N: Never ever be in debt. Pay your debts.
- D: Discipline yourself.



**II. “And thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt shew them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do.” (Exodus 18:20 KJV)** Usually, I have a counseling session with all my disciples especially the new ones to be acquainted with their personal life and especially their problems and their struggles. When I discover a financial problem, I help them with a strategy to rectify the situation and solve the problem. I do give instructions and assignment to keep them moving forward toward solving their financial problems and to maintain the brethren who are afflicted with safety.

**III. “Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years.” (Genesis 41:34 KJV)** When the time comes to implement the teaching of savings, I find that many are unable to save because they are weak in front of temptations; most of them by the end of the month have no more savings. Some of them will keep what they saved for a few months, but ultimately they will lose what they had saved in front of the first trial or temptation. When I reflected on Genesis 41:34, I discovered this Word of God: **“appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land.”** I realized that I needed to be the officer of those people and keep their money in order to help them save. I decided to do this because they were not able to do it by themselves.

In the first instance, I was not very willing to do that because many of the people might think that I am having a wrong motive or even may think that I may take their money. But when I saw verse 34 in Genesis 41, I decided that I can be a helpful officer and servant to the people of God who do not know how to save what God had entrusted to them and never looked back. For this reason, I sit down with each and every disciple and do with him/her the monthly budget; breaking the salary to tithes, accommodation, food, transport, communication, groceries, family maintenance, pocket money, and other items. The budgeting would ultimately show how much money left and that would be the amount of saving. This saving we collect, keep and maintain a record of it in the treasury of the church. For the first few years, there was a good number who were able to save a considerable amount of money. By the end of the first few years, however, resistance started against

this ministry by some people who put doubts in the minds of those who were keeping their savings in the church. Gradually, the people withdraw what they saved with the false assurance that they would safeguard their own money.

After a while, by following them up, I found out that almost all of them had lost their savings by spending all of it on nonessentials. What had happened then convinced me to help the weak brethren by keeping their savings in our church treasury with a record of their giving.

So I started once again to do that, and the Lord helped me this time. Thanks to inflation, there were more changes than before in the nation's economy. So the subject of saving was more needed and what I was doing became a realistic and practical matter that the brethren through a period of time were able to see God's love and His care to them. The work in this ministry prospers and has increased. Many of the brethren who are of low income and who are working under the sun in hard work were able to save a good amount of money. That helps them to see their obedience to God's Word brought much prosperity in their lives. I directed a good number of them to open their own personal bank account and moved what they had saved from the church treasury to their own personal bank accounts and put the money in deposit with some interest.

Those who are putting their savings in the church usually put their savings with the same envelope in which they put their tithes, their firstfruits and their offerings, and they will indicate the amount of savings. When the envelopes that had savings reached the treasury, the tithes, the firstfruits and the offerings will be taken out from the envelopes. Then the different offerings of the people are segregated. Only the savings are left in the same envelope with their name and amount to be recorded and kept aside in the treasury collected with the previous envelopes that had been collected from the same person in the previous months. When the time would come for the brother or the sister to take out his/her saving from the church treasury to place it in a bank, then he/she will take his/her money, the same money notes from the same envelopes in which he/she brought the money with to the church.

After they deposited what they saved in their bank account as time deposits, still some of them who are not yet strong would prefer to continue to save with the church banking. Each year, what they collected will be handed over to them to be added to their fixed time deposits in their banks and will give us receipts of their transactions so that we can still follow up and scrutinize the status of their finances.

Shown below the details written on the envelopes that we use in our churches:

Name: _____	Date: _____
Tithes: _____	Firstfruits: _____
Alms: _____	Missions: _____
Offerings: _____	Savings: _____
Malachi 3:7-12	Proverbs 3:9-10

This kind of church banking has proven to be successful. This can be followed in every church to help those who don't have the will to save. There is no mention in the Scriptures about church banking but the Word of God can direct us and the Holy Spirit can create any ministry needed in the life of God's church in order to help the people of God to overcome trials and to grow and become mature.

The historical book of Second Maccabeus speaks about an incident in which it mentions that the Gentile government wanted to get hold of the money deposited in the temple of God by people. We can read this below: (please note, I do not believe this book is part of the Bible although I do endorse it as a good source of Jewish history during the Silent Years.)

“1 When the holy city was living in harmony, and people observed the laws strictly because of Onias the high priest, who was devoted to God and hated evil, 2 the kings used to honor the place and glorify the temple by sending the best gifts. 3 Seleucus the king of Asia even supplied all expenses for the sacrificial service from his own revenues. 4 But a certain Simon from the tribe of Benjamin, who had been appointed administrator of the temple, had a difference of opinion with the high priest about the management of the city market. 5 Since he wasn't able to overcome Onias, he went to Thraseas' son Apollonius, who was governor of Coele-Syria and Phoenicia at that time. 6 Simon told him that the treasury in Jerusalem was filled with untold riches and that it was full of uncounted cash, which didn't belong to the accounts for the sacrifices, but potentially fell under the king's authority. 7 Apollonius met with the king and told him about the funds. The king chose his chief administrator Heliodorus and sent him with orders to confiscate the funds in question. 8 Heliodorus immediately made the journey, supposedly to inspect the cities of Coele-Syria and Phoenicia but actually to put the king's plan into effect. 9 When he arrived in Jerusalem and was received in a friendly manner by the high priest of the city, he revealed the information that had been reported and stated plainly why he had come. Then he asked whether these things were true. 10 The high priest informed him that these were the deposits of widows and orphans, 11 and also some deposits of Hyrcanus the Tobiad, an exceedingly prominent man. He also said that there were only four hundred talents of silver and two hundred talents of gold, and that the ungodly Simon had given a false report. 12 It was wholly unthinkable, he added, to commit such an injustice against those who trusted in the holiness of the place and in the dignity and sacredness of the temple that is honored throughout the whole world. 13 But Heliodorus, because of the royal commands, was firm that in any case the king could take these funds. 14 So he set a date and proceeded to inspect these funds. This caused great agony throughout the whole city. 15 But the priests threw themselves down before the altar in their priestly robes *and called to heaven to the one who had given the laws about such deposits, that he should keep the deposits safe.*” {2 Maccabeus 3:1-15}

We have used church banking services for another reason too. We had found that some of our brethren who had loans to clear in banks were

paying high rates of interest. We loaned them from the alms collection of the church treasury so that they could clear their debts without being consumed by the high rates of interest. Then they paid the church over a period of time only the capital amount without interest.

We were inspired to do that from the book of Nehemiah, a policy of reformation he adopted in order to remove the suffering of people paying high rates of interest on their loans.

*“1 And there was a great cry of the people and of their wives against their brethren the Jews. 2 For there were that said, We, our sons, and our daughters, are many: therefore we take up corn for them, that we may eat, and live. 3 Some also there were that said, We have mortgaged our lands, vineyards, and houses, that we might buy corn, because of the dearth. 4 There were also that said, We have borrowed money for the king's tribute, and that upon our lands and vineyards. 5 Yet now our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children: and, lo, we bring into bondage our sons and our daughters to be servants, and some of our daughters are brought unto bondage already: neither is it in our power to redeem them; for other men have our lands and vineyards. 6 And I was very angry when I heard their cry and these words. 7 Then I consulted with myself, and I rebuked the nobles, and the rulers, and said unto them, Ye exact usury, every one of his brother. And I set a great assembly against them. 8 And I said unto them, We after our ability have redeemed our brethren the Jews, which were sold unto the heathen; and will ye even sell your brethren? or shall they be sold unto us? Then held they their peace, and found nothing to answer. 9 Also I said, It is not good that ye do: ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies? 10 I likewise, and my brethren, and my servants, might exact of them money and corn: I pray you, let us leave off this usury. 11 Restore, I pray you, to them, even this day, their lands, their vineyards, their oliveyards, and their houses, also the hundredth part of the money, and of the corn, the wine, and the oil, that ye exact of them. 12 Then said they, We will restore them, and will require nothing of them; so will we do as thou sayest. Then I called the priests, and took an oath of them, that they should do according to this promise. 13 Also I shook my lap, and said, So God shake out every man from his house,*

*and from his labour, that performeth not this promise, even thus be he shaken out, and emptied. And all the congregation said, Amen, and praised the LORD. And the people did according to this promise.” (Nehemiah 5:1-13 KJV)*

The principles for giving loans to those brethren in debt were based on *Nehemiah 5:8* “*And I said unto them, We after our ability have redeemed our brethren the Jews, which were sold unto the heathen; and will ye even sell your brethren?” (Nehemiah 5:8 KJV)* So Nehemiah declared that they were redeeming their brethren from the bondage of borrowing money from nonbelievers. Nehemiah and his brethren lent money without interest. “*I likewise, and my brethren, and my servants, might exact of them money and corn: I pray you, let us leave off this usury.” (Nehemiah 5:10 KJV)* “*I and my brothers and my men are also lending the people money and grain. But let us stop charging interest.” (Nehemiah 5:10 NIV)*

When the need to help a particular brother or a family who is in debt arises, usually the council of the church meets and studies the case and reaches a decision. Upon the approval of the church council, a loan is given to pay the capital amount along with interest to free the brother from the bondage of usury.

For giving loans, we don't use any money that is deposited by the brethren as savings, but we use the money that is allocated for alms. We have allocated five percent of all the money collected for alms, and part of that money is used to give loans to those in financially tight situations.

# Chapter Eighteen

## *Does the Church Have the Right to Interfere With Its Members' Finances?*

Does the Church have the right to interfere with the members' finances? This question is raised by many people and on various occasions. Usually, people pose this question out of resentment, when the church will start to deal with sin in their lives and dishonesty pertaining to finances. Many don't want someone to interfere with their personal lives and with their finances, but the Scriptures has the final Word that we all need to comply with.

Does the Church have the right to interfere with the members' finances? This question is also raised by genuine church leaders and pastors who really want to pastor their members in the righteousness of God, and they are questioning if they really need to interfere with their members' finances.

A person's financial state is one of the most personal things for most people and many prefer to keep their financial information from others. That is justifiable to some extent, but that should not be applied in the life of the members of the church. The Bible has a lot of teaching about finances and the church should teach about that. In order for the church to implement such teachings in the life of the members, she needs to scrutinize the financial position of each individual member. We will go through the Scriptures and will find the answers in the light of God's Word.

There are real reasons why the church and the pastor of the church should know the condition of the flock and know about their finances. They are listed below:

***1. Is the church member working? "28 Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth."***

*(Ephesians 4:28 KJV)* The pastor of the church should be sure that the church member is working. This is important because the Bible tells us the following: “6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. 7 For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; 8 Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: 9 Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us. 10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.”

*(2 Thessalonians 3:6-10 KJV)* The pastor of the church should be sure that every member of his flock is working, because otherwise, then the person who is lazy will try to steal like a thief from the labor of others without paying a price. So the pastor of the church should ask, “Are you working?” If the answer “No,” then the pastor should ask “How then you are living? What is the source of your living?” The pastor of the church has to know the source of his living and make sure the member is not preying on others for his sustenance. He needs to be sure to apply Paul’s instruction to Titus. “14 And let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful.”

*(Titus 3:14 KJV)* Even in Paul’s instruction to the Thessalonians, “10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.” *(2 Thessalonians 3:10 KJV)*

2. *What is the income of the church member?* The pastor should know exactly the source of income of the member and the amount because he needs to determine the amount of tithe and the firstfruit that the member should bring to the Lord: “8 Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. 9 Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. 10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. 11 And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither



*shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts. 12 And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts.” (Malachi 3:8-12 KJV) “9 Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: 10 So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.” (Proverbs 3:9-10 KJV) The pastor of the church should endeavor to teach the people to be givers to God and all that they give should be directed to one place, the church that the Lord has placed them in. “Then there shall be a place which the LORD your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there; thither shall ye bring all that I command you; your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the heave offering of your hand, and all your choice vows which ye vow unto the LORD:” (Deuteronomy 12:11 KJV) As the pastor teaches all these aspects of giving, he should know the exact amount of the church member’s income so that he can keep tag on whether the member is following the instructions of God’s Word.*

**3. Does the church member have a debt?** The pastor should teach the church member not to be in debt because, *“The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.” (Proverbs 22:7 KJV)* The pastor of the church should advise and teach his members how to earn money to pay his/her debt and also be sustained, in the same way Elisha advised the widow who was in debt. *“I Now there cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets unto Elisha, saying, Thy servant my husband is dead; and thou knowest that thy servant did fear the LORD: and the creditor is come to take unto him my two sons to be bondmen. 2 And Elisha said unto her, What shall I do for thee? tell me, what hast thou in the house? And she said, Thine handmaid hath not any thing in the house, save a pot of oil. 3 Then he said, Go, borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbours, even empty vessels; borrow not a few. 4 And when thou art come in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons, and shalt pour out into all those vessels, and thou shalt set aside that which is full. 5 So she went from him, and shut the door upon her and upon her sons, who brought the vessels to her; and she poured out. 6 And it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said unto her son, Bring me yet a vessel. And he said unto her, There is not a vessel more. And the oil stayed. 7 Then she came and told the man of God.*

***And he said, Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest.” (2 Kings 4:1-7 KJV)*** It is not the true love of God that the pastor shows when he is not aware that a member of his church is in debt and he is doing nothing about it. It is not the true love of God shown by the church when a family is in a financial struggle and the church does not know about it. How can the church reach out to them and help them with Godly instruction and advice if the matter is not disclosed?

***4. Is the church member has saving?*** The pastor should teach the members not to waste as Jesus had taught his disciples. ***“When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.” (John 6:12 KJV)*** The pastor should teach his members to save part of their income as Joseph had instructed Pharaoh to do in the time of plenty and keep it for the time of famine. ***“33 Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. 34 Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years. 35 And let them gather all the food of those good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities. 36 And that food shall be for store to the land against the seven years of famine, which shall be in the land of Egypt; that the land perish not through the famine.” (Genesis 41:33-36 KJV)*** The pastor should teach the members to save one-fifth of their income that is 20% to be kept as the reserve for the future, to face famine and hardships. Little by little, a good capital can be built up for the future. ***“Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labour shall increase.” (Proverbs 13:11 KJV)***

***5. The church should control the spending of the individual saving amount to ensure that the money is directed to the purpose: “And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.” (Genesis 41:44 KJV)*** So Patriarch Joseph was appointed to control the flow of the stored up food during the years of collection and the years of famine. The pastor should be aware of the amount of savings and should be the one to approve the usage of the money saved to ensure that it is directed in accordance with God’s will. Stored up money can be easily

abused and be instrumental in establishing wrong relationships, for we know that wealth makes friends: ***“Wealth maketh many friends; but the poor is separated from his neighbour.” (Proverbs 19:4 KJV)*** ***“Many will intreat the favour of the prince: and every man is a friend to him that giveth gifts.” (Proverbs 19:6 KJV)*** The pastor of the church should be aware that the church members who have money are more liable to be victimized by people who draw near to them with the motive of extracting or borrowing money.

***6. What about saving up for the next generation?*** The Bible teaches us that a good man leaves an inheritance for his children and that parents save up for their children. ***“A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children.” (Proverbs 13:22 KJV)*** ***“For the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.” (2 Corinthians 12:14 KJV)*** According to these Scriptures, it is the responsibility of the church to teach her members and to monitor that they save up for their children. Parents who don't save for their children will bring poverty and ruin to their lives. ***“The rich man's wealth is his strong city: the destruction of the poor is their poverty.” (Proverbs 10:15 KJV)*** ***“The crown of the wise is their riches: but the foolishness of fools is folly.” (Proverbs 14:24 KJV)***

***7. Is the member spending wisely?*** Wise spending is mandatory so that the church members can use their income to meet their needs, to meet the needs of giving to God, to help others and to keep the remaining as savings. The church should teach the members to economize their expenses and try to get free and cheap resources. ***“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” (Isaiah 55:1 KJV)*** Avoid and cut unnecessary resources. ***“Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.” (Isaiah 55:2 KJV)*** The pastor of the church should teach against worldliness and condemn the wrong style of living like eating expensive food, eating in restaurants and hotels, throwing parties, wearing expensive clothes, buying unnecessary accessories and appliances and so on: ***“He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man: he that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich.”***

*(Proverbs 21:17 KJV) “15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. 17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.” (1 John 2:15-17 KJV)*

*8. Does the pastor or the church need to interfere with the food the member cooks and eats? In Genesis 2, the Lord said to Adam, “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” (Genesis 2:17 KJV) The pastor should instruct the members not to eat certain food and discourage them from adopting certain eating habits that will cripple their finances and hinder them from being faithful stewards, to meet other needs of life. Food can cause many health problems and affect the physical fitness of the church members. Therefore, the pastor of the church needs to instruct his church members regarding food. Moses with regard to the manna that God gave to the Israelites, directed them to do the following: “And he said unto them, This is that which the LORD hath said, To morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the LORD: bake that which ye will bake to day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning.” (Exodus 16:23 KJV) Peter and the apostles, and later on ‘the seven’ were in charge of the food that the church members were cooking and eating. “1 And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. 2 Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. 3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. 4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. 5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: 6 Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands*

*on them. 7 And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.” (Acts 6:1-7 KJV)* Many families who are part of the church face many financial problems and that forces them to take wrong decisions and actions. That happens because of worldliness and lack of wisdom in budgeting and spending. The church should be a big help to such kind of people by teaching them and helping them to implement the method of wise spending, eating healthy home cooked food with ingredients purchased at a low cost.

*9. Why should every member have savings and an extra amount of money kept aside?* To help those who are in need. *“He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor.” (Proverbs 22:9 KJV)* *“12 Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee. 13 But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: 14 And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.” (Luke 14:12-14 KJV)* *“Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings.” (Acts 24:17)*

*10. Should the church be the one to supervise the process of giving to the needy?* The church has to monitor the source of money and evaluate the need and the motive for giving. *“34 Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, 35 And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need. 36 And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, 37 Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.” (Acts 4:34-37 KJV)* The apostles were in charge of the ministry of giving for charitable purposes. Transparency is needed. No transaction of money, buying, selling, or borrowing should be carried out without the church pastor's knowledge and approval.

**11. Is the church responsible to teach the people all these details?**

Yes, it is her responsibility to use the Scriptures wisely in order to direct the members to spend wisely and handle their finances correctly. If the church does not do that, who else will? We need to instruct every pastor of the churches to do the following for the people in his congregation mentioned in the verse below. ***“And thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt shew them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do.” (Exodus 18:20 KJV)*** The church is accountable to God for the life of the people under her care. The church leaders are requested to give an account to God for the lives of the people under their care. ***“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.” (Hebrews 13:17 KJV)*** The job description of the church leaders is that they watch the souls that are entrusted to them.

**12. The church is responsible to investigate and discipline those who abuse, and sin in money affair:**

With regard to the sin of Ananias and Sapphira, God used Peter to interfere and deal with it. ***“1 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, 2 And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. 3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? 4 Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. 5 And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. 6 And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him. 7 And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. 8 And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much. 9 Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out. 10 Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and,***

*carrying her forth, buried her by her husband. 11 And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.” (Acts 5:1-11 KJV)*

With regard to the sin of Achan, God interfered and dealt with that sin through the life of Joshua. God showed to Joshua how to find out the man who had sinned against God, and when Achan was taken to Joshua, the latter interrogated him and investigated his crime. **“19 And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me. 20 And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done: 21 When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it.”** (Joshua 7:19-21 KJV)

When Joshua heard what Achan had done, he sent men to the tent of Achan and to bring from there what Achan had stolen and hidden in his tent. **“22 So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran unto the tent; and, behold, it was hid in his tent, and the silver under it. 23 And they took them out of the midst of the tent, and brought them unto Joshua, and unto all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the LORD.”** (Joshua 7:22-23 KJV) Like Joshua, the church must investigate the sin of every member and deal with it so that people don't die in their sins like Achan.

In front of the pastor of the church should be a financial report for each member that includes the following items:

1. Work status
2. Income
3. Expenditure
4. Debts
5. Savings
6. Tithes
7. Various offerings
8. Firstfruits
9. Contribution to alms

The following is what I want to tell: *“If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained.” (1 Timothy 4:6 KJV)*

God has entrusted his church to faithful ministers who need to be accountable to God and care well for the spiritual wellbeing of the people who are under their care. Therefore, apply and live what you have learned in this book and also pass on the blessing to the people who are under your care.



Until the Lord Jesus Christ would come to take us with Him to Heaven, let us persevere and continue to be good stewards of whatever has been placed in our hands to fulfill God's purpose in our lives. Our good stewardships and the way we conduct our lives will pave the way for the next generation to enjoy all the promises of God. For this is God's will for us in Christ Jesus. Therefore, let us apply what we have learned from studying this book. Let us endeavor to practice what we have learned from the Scriptures so that our lives will shine and bring forth the fruit that God would like to see in us and pass it to the next generation. Our good example in stewardships will pave the way for the next generation to follow in our steps to apply God's Word as they had seen us practice. *"The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law."* (Deuteronomy 29:29 KJV)

*Lord, I pray that the purpose of sending your Word in this book will prevail and shall be accomplished in the life of your Church and your people. Lord, protect this book and use it for your glory. Take it and make it reach on time those who are in need of it; to receive Your Word and to apply its principles in their lives. Lord, let families and individuals get delivered from financial bondage that enslave them. Let this book reach pastors, leaders, and churches and let its principles be taught to people. Let there be fruit in abundance so that Your name will be glorified and Your will and Word be proclaimed. I thank You and praise You. This is all I ask and pray in Jesus' Name, Amen.*

For further help and spiritual guidance  
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## ***About the Author:***

*Ramiz Khalaf was born at Nineveh, Iraq, in 1965. He finished his education as a medical doctor and worked as Surgeon for several years. Ramiz was an Atheist, but in 1999 he was called by GOD to know and receive the grace of the Lord Christ Jesus. In 2006, God took him from his medical profession to serve as full-time pastor and overseer of the Church of God, United Arab Emirates. Ramiz married Violeta Olermo in 2005 and he is a father of one son, Isaac.*

### ***His Education:***

- 1- M.B.Ch.B from Baghdad Medical College 1989.
- 2- F.R.C.S. in General Surgery 2000
- 3- F.I.C.S. in General Surgery 2000.
- 4- Haggai Institute Leadership Seminar 2003.
- 5- Ordained Minister Church of God, MF #59868 September 2005.
- 6- Completed all Biblical Studies in Church of God School of Ministry.
- 7- Completed all Doctrinal Studies in Church of God School of Ministry.
- 8- Completed all Pastoral Studies in Church of God School of Ministry.
- 9- Awarded Certificate In Ministerial Studies (CIMS) by the Board of Directors of the Church of God School of Ministry in February 2013.

*The author's ministry is preaching the Gospel, teaching and making new disciples, planting and nurturing new congregations, counseling and training workers to become effective leaders as they lead their families, lead others to Christ, and lead new Church congregations.*

## ***Other Books Published by the Author:***

- 1- The Duties of the Priest.***
- 2- Serve God's Purpose.***
- 3- Put God First.***