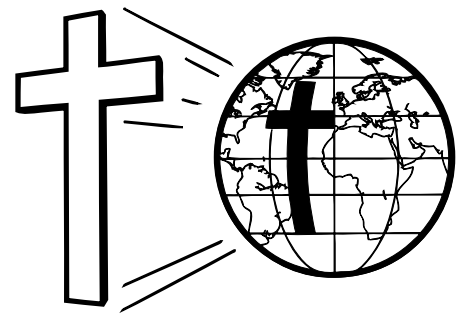


Foundation of Faith



GOD
and Our Beloved Money

How Can We
SUPPORT GOD'S WORK
in Our Time?

FINANCES THE BIBLICAL WAY

DANGERS
of Wealth

CHRISTIANITY
that Reaches our Wallet

THANKFUL
for Everything

MEAGER HARVEST-
Hard Bread



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Editorial

Dear Reader!

Harvest time is the reward for all the effort and work that the farmer has done by ploughing, sowing and often extra watering and weeding. In fall the crops may be gathered. And from a good field, we can expect thirty-, sixty- and a hundred-fold fruit. Our Savior, Jesus Christ Himself, explained it to His disciples (Matthew 13:8).

God expects a harvest from us as well. We are all creations of our great God. From Him we have received life, grace, gifts, and talents. Although we are all so different, God created us wonderfully. David prayed: "I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well (Psalm 139:14).

The Lord has also blessed us all, each one of us according to our ability. "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10).

You and I, we are created, redeemed, and called to good works. So, out of gratitude for all earthly and spiritual blessings, we want to honor our Lord not only in words, but in deeds and truth.

In this issue, we reflect on the topic of "a cheerful giver, who God loves" (2 Corinthians 9:7). Yes, God loves those who are cheerful givers and prove their love through sacrifice. Scripture shows us that it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35).

Dear Readers, in this time of grace, let us do what we can for the Savior. A song writer says:

*Shall we be found with only leaves
when Jesus comes to gather sheaves?
Nay, sowing daily o'er the land,
we'll come with joyful sheaves in hand.*

H.D. Nimz

Do You Have Reason to Be Thankful?

What happens when God teaches us a lesson in “Thankfulness”?

It was on the Wednesday night before Thanksgiving when Verena, a young woman in her twenties, said to her husband: “Lars, it’s time to get ready for prayer meeting.” The young couple had been Christians for years but had undergone some trouble lately. The young man was very discouraged that night and said, “No, tonight I’m not going to prayer meeting. Tonight everyone will probably be expected to stand up and say how grateful they are. Honestly, I’m not grateful. I don’t really think I have anything to be grateful for. And I will not pretend! I work hard and despite all my efforts, there is barely enough for basic necessities. Look at our dingy apartment! Other people can live in beautiful houses and have everything they want. Maybe my faith isn’t strong enough, but I can’t say I’m satisfied with what I have.”

“But look at that beautiful picture on the wall over there!” his wife said. A picture of a child being protected by an angel standing behind it, hung there.

“Oh, that picture didn’t cost much!” replied the young man. The wife opened the Bible and showed him Psalm 91:11 where it is written: “For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways.”—Paying no attention to that, her husband said: “Tonight I’m staying home.”—“Then I will go by myself and Marie can stay at home with you,” his wife said, and went on her way, leaving their four-year old daughter at home with her daddy.

It seemed that not much time had passed when Lars, who had fallen asleep in his rocking chair while reading the newspaper, was startled by the voice of his wife. She shouted, “Lars, Lars, where is Marie?” These words quickly brought him to his senses. “Is the service over?” he asked. “Yes, but where is Marie?” asked Verena.—“Oh, she cannot be far away. She was just here. One of the neighbor kids stayed here and played with her.”—He put the newspaper away and began to help his wife search for the child. The four-year old girl was nowhere to be found.—“She must have gone home with the neighbor’s child when I dozed off a little,” the father said. But they had not seen Marie there either. “Well, then she must have gone out on the streets. Come on, let’s hurry!” the mother said.

By now the whole neighborhood was greatly concerned and helped in the search, but in vain. They found no trace of the child. “We have to call the police for help,” said Lars, who was even more bitter now than before his wife had gone to prayer meeting. But the police also could not provide any information about the lost child, and all inquiries were unsuccessful. Finally, the young mother fainted and was taken home.

Lars was at his end as well. He fell to his knees beside their bed and begged God for forgiveness for his ingratitude and his grumbling. He vowed to God that if He would make his wife healthy and let him see their daughter again, he would be grateful and satisfied in

the future. He prayed as he had not prayed for a long time. Then he slept, overwhelmed by fatigue.

The next morning the sun was shining through the window when he awoke. Then he heard a child's voice, "Daddy, where are you?" At first he did not know if he was awake or dreaming. Then he realized that it was the voice of his little Marie. The voice came from under their bed. Slowly she came crawling out and he took her in his arms. They had been so agitated last night that it hadn't occurred to them to look under the bed.

Overwhelmed with joy, he gently awoke his wife, as he held the child in his arms. When she opened her eyes, he called to her: "Wake up! Today is Thanksgiving Day! And I assure you that I am very grateful and will no longer be dissatisfied and complain!"

Together they began to list all the blessings God had given them, and their hearts overflowed in praise and thanksgiving to God.

C.E. Brown

I Just Want to Thank You, Lord

*I just want to thank You, Lord
For all the things You do.
For loving me and being there,
To show me what to do.*

*I thank You for Your only Son
Who died on Calvary,
Who took my sins upon His back
And paid the price for me.*

*I thank You for Your Holy Spirit,
Who guides me every day.
Who speaks to me and helps me,
And tells me what to say.*

*I thank You for Your friendship
When no one else is there;
When I feel all alone,
Your love is everywhere.*

*You made the moon and sunshine
And the stars that shine above,
All these things and more,
You made them out of love.*

*Each thing You make is different
In its own special way.
Every tiny detail,
So unique in each new day.*

*So here's how I will thank you:
I'll live my life for You,
I'll love You with my heart and soul,
And in everything I do.*

*So not just this Thanksgiving,
But every single day
I'll read Your word and praise Your name,
And walk always in your way.*

Christine Eves, Swartz Creek, USA

THANKSGIVING

Did You Thank God?


In times of trouble, the road to heaven
is teeming with prayers;
in times of fortune, it is dead,
so empty and untrodden.

The New Testament tells us of ten lepers who came to Jesus with their severe illness and begged Him: “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” (Luke 17:13). These men found themselves in great distress and this great need drove them to Jesus.

It is often like that today as well. When overwhelmed by need, one who once thought He could live without Jesus will seek and find Him. An individual begins to knock on God’s door, a door that he had previously passed hundreds of times. Yes, trouble teaches us to pray! God did say: “Call upon Me in the day of trouble” (Psalm 50:15)! But should we only pray when we are in trouble? It is obviously good for us, driven by our needs and problems, to finally give up our self-assurance and seek help in Jesus. But is it not far better to remain in constant connection with Him? There was a sailor once who constantly slandered and swore. But when the storm howled, the mast cracked and the planks splintered, he folded his hands and prayed—but he remained the same old man. Afterwards, he swore just as before. This dishonors God.

Jesus helped the ten lepers and healed them. They did not call out in vain. Nine of them went away and no longer thought about their Helper. Only one turned back to thank the Lord. Only one? At least one! Where, however, are the nine? How was it possible that they forgot to thank their benefactor?—And how is it still possible today?





One must have courage to acknowledge Jesus with gratitude. Yes, the fear of being ridiculed by the world holds many back. Among the nine of whom Jesus inquired, yes, among the hundreds and thousands that Jesus helped and who forgot to give thanks, there certainly were some whose hearts urged them to share the gratitude they owed. But they are afraid to express and acknowledge it. Their lips are sealed shut. They are afraid of being ridiculed!

What good is a tree that does not bear fruit? What good is a bird that does not sing? What should God do with people who are afraid to confess Him and to thank Him for the help He has provided? In times of trouble, people tremble. Once the trouble has passed, however, the same self-sufficient attitude returns and the person is embarrassed to admit that he called out to God for help. He does not even want to be reminded of it.

It is almost impossible to fathom how God's love does not grow cold by the thankless attitude of the world, or that our ingratitude does not burn in the fire of God's eternal love. Hundreds of years ago, Martin Luther revealed the severe consequences of ungratefulness to the German people, when he said: "Dear Germans, buy, while the market is held at your door. Gather in, because the sun is shining and the weather is good. Use God's Word and grace, because it is there. For you must know, God's Word and grace are a passing rain shower that won't return where it once was. It once was with the Jews; but what once was has passed, and now they have nothing. Paul took it to Greece. What once was has also passed, now they have the Turks. Rome and the land of the Latin's also had it; but what once was has passed, and now they have the pope.—And you Germans must not think that you will always have it, for your thanklessness and rejection will not allow it to stay. Therefore grasp and hold fast whoever can grasp and hold! Idle hands must experience a bad year."—Shouldn't many today reflect on these words of Luther?

The nine ungrateful men that Jesus helped, and their many companions over the ages robbed themselves of the blessing by forgetting to give thanks. In God's Word we see how we can receive His blessing: "Whoever offers praise glorifies Me: and to him who orders his conduct aright I will show the salvation of God" (Psalm 50:23 NIV).

Finances in the Kingdom of God

Does God care about our finances? Does what we do with our money impact the kingdom of God? Many times we fail to recognize or remember this, thinking that we are the only ones impacted by how we handle our finances. But this oversight damages God's work. The word of God gives us clear and specific instructions on how our finances can support His kingdom, and throughout the ages, God's faithful children have carried out these instructions.

Early Examples

Long before the Law was given to Moses, people pledged tithes to God.

- Abram gave a tithe to Melchizedek, king of Salem (Genesis 14:18-20).
- Jacob made a vow and promised the Lord: “[O]f all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You” (Genesis 28:20-22).

God Commanded the Israelites to Tithe

- Leviticus 27:30-32 states: “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 to the Lord. If a man wants at all to redeem any of his tithes, he shall add one-fifth to it. And concerning the tithe of the herd or the flock, of whatever passes under the rod, the tenth one shall be holy to the Lord.”
- God commanded the Israelites to give a sacred tithe. God did not want the chaff; on the contrary, He called for the grain. The waste or the leftover is not what God wants; rather, the best belongs to the Lord.

Purpose of the Tithe

- God chose Moses and Aaron and called them into His service, and God subsequently set apart the tribe of Levi for His ministry. No one from the tribe of Levi had a regular job. They were to dedicate their time and energy to performing the work of God.
- God made provisions for His workers: “For the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer up as a heave offering to the Lord, I have given to the Levites

as an inheritance; therefore I have said to them, ‘Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance’” (Numbers 18:24).

- The Levites were to tithe from their income (Numbers 18:26-28).
- This was the financial structure that God put into place. During the Old Testament, the barter system was used for tithing.

More Divine Instructions

- The year of tithing (Deuteronomy 14:28-29): Through this command, God wanted to educate His children in charity, selflessness, and sacrifice.
- A tenth for the king: This command gave rise to Jesus' words: “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's” (Luke 20:25).

God Rebukes His People through the Prophets

- “Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, ‘In what way have we robbed You?’ In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me, even this whole nation. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this,” Says the LORD of hosts, “If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it” (Malachi 3:8-10).
- Can people rob God? Are people permitted to steal and cheat?

- Does it necessarily have to be a tenth? Yes, God expects it.
- Jesus does not abolish this command; rather, He confirms it in Matthew 23:23.

Guidance and Orders in the New Testament

If in the Old Testament God already provided for the advancement of His work and economic well-being of His kingdom, how much more important is the advancement of His kingdom in the Gospel Age. God has given us the greatest gift in Jesus Christ, and this gift is not limited geographically to one country such as Palestine. On the contrary, the riches of His grace must spread from Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria into the entire world. This gift is for all people and all nations. What an enormous task! Will you help?

- Jesus chose twelve disciples. One of His disciples was the treasurer, and he was responsible for managing the purse.
- The early Christians needed a system to manage monetary gifts, and so brothers were chosen to distribute these gifts as needed (Acts 4:34-37). Seven men were chosen to serve in this position so that these gifts would be distributed to the Greek widows (Acts 6:1-2).
- In Luke 8:3, we read of some widows who followed Jesus and gave of their wealth to provide for Jesus and His disciples in a remarkable way.
- Jesus commands giving: “Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom” (Luke 6:38). Another translation says, “Give away your life; you’ll find life given back, but not merely given back—given back with bonus and blessing” (Luke 6:38 MSG).
- Paul preaches about giving in 2 Corinthians 9:6-9.
- Paul also advised: “On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come” (1 Corinthians 16:2).

All congregations, large or small, need money for their growth. In the same way that each family or household has expenses and needs financial resources, a family of believers also has expenses and needs financial resources.

- It is one of God’s commands that those who spread the Gospel should make their living by the Gospel (please read 1 Corinthians 9:7-14). It is often said that Paul lived with the family of Aquila and Priscilla, worked as a tent maker, and so made his living (Acts 18:1-3). This is true, for Paul did not receive any financial help from his new mission outposts among the non-believers. Paul, however, writes in 2 Corinthians 11:8: “I robbed other churches, taking wages from them to minister to you.”
- Similarly, in the first five years that I worked in Mexico, preaching the Gospel and building the school, I did not take any money from the locals. I preached the Gospel to them free of charge. However, the congregations and brothers and sisters from Canada and USA supported me financially. Yes, I confess: I “robbed” other churches, taking money from them, in order to serve in Mexico. And so it has been throughout the years: the money for work abroad, travel expenses, and all other related costs came from the offerings of faithful brothers and sisters.
- A church building requires money. In the same way that the Temple was built, repaired, and cleaned using offerings and tithes that were brought to the Temple in the Old Testament, church buildings today need money to pay for things like light, water, and heating. Everyone should help with these costs, for “God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7).
- We must also consider giving to the poor, and to local and foreign missions. Wherever children of God serve and follow the Lord with faithfulness, joy, and courage, nothing is wanting. If these qualities are lacking, there is no love!
- These financial structures and commandments are not only necessary, but have been put together according to the will and counsel of our God. Within a local congregation it is also wonderful to be able to work together, as much more can be accomplished by working as a group than by people working on their own.
- “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity For there the Lord commanded the blessing—Life forevermore” (Psalm 133:1, 3).

H. D. Nimz

The Obligation to Give

“On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.” (1 Corinthians 16:2)

Unfortunately, for many of us, the request contained in these words is rarely followed or even acknowledged. It is not in our nature to want to give; rather, it is our tendency to take. Every one of us possesses a certain degree of greed. But giving is a part of Christianity. It is a divine duty and also a privilege. Shouldn't we, who receive so much, be willing to do our part to bring the gospel to mankind?

If all of God's children would regularly contribute their gifts to advance the work of the Gospel, then the Kingdom of God would progress much further. And it is God's will that our giving be regular and systematic. It is not enough that we give only when we feel like it. Our giving to the work of the Lord should be consistent. God is a God of order and He ordained a certain system we are to adopt: “on the first day of the week.” That is not too often, nor too seldom. This becomes possible for everyone and should bring success.

The idea expressed by the apostle is that, in every household, a store should accumulate for the Lord, which would be used at the right time in the right way.

We should not just save for ourselves and for our children, but also for the Lord and His work.

Just as our savings should be regular, they should also be personal, so that everyone, not just the rich, but also the poor, can benefit. Everyone has equal rights, and therefore equal responsibilities. Everyone can do something, because the Lord gives everyone just so much so that he can serve the Lord, even with little, and thereby store up for himself treasures in heaven (Matthew 6:20).

In Luke 21:1-4, we read of a widow in the temple who was surely very poor. “Two mites” was her entire livelihood, and yet she did not neglect to submit what little she had, and at the same time everything she had, into the treasury. The Lord used her as a great example for us to emulate. The Lord does not care how much we give, but rather our motive. It is therefore wrong to give nothing at all just because you do not have much to give. If you cannot give the Lord ten talents, then give Him at least the one you received, and lay it on the

altar so that He can use it, and so you will not be found unfaithful.

Our giving should be done voluntarily. God does not want force. “God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7). In the Old Covenant, certain laws determined how much each person should give. But in a Christian home where grace and freedom rule, we should not be moved to obedience in the area of giving by a threatening law, but rather by the saving grace of God and by our love for Jesus.

It is the Lord’s will that we should give according to what we have. But we should not be giving just from our overabundance. It is not a true offering unless it costs us something. The Lord does not ask for too much, rather, only what is possible for us to give. But it is His will that our giving be regular and proportional.

Let us focus for a moment on our motives for giving. First, it is a command given to us. We can discuss the initial Scripture reference not only in light of it being good advice from the apostle, but also as a command from the Lord. This should be considered carefully by every single Christian.

Then we should also consider that we are the Lord’s debtors. We brought nothing with us into the world. Everything we own we received first from the Lord. Therefore none of our possessions really belong to us, but are simply goods temporarily entrusted to us, since God has the first claim on them. In the Holy Scriptures, we are never described as owners, but as stewards. And if we are only the stewards or the administrators, then the proceeds of the goods or the business do not belong to us, but instead to the Owner. We owe our God infinitely more, “Who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3). The Father gave us His most precious, His only begotten Son. The Son gave His life and His

blood for us. And the Holy Spirit gave us a new heart and the hope of eternal life. How great then is our debt!

The hardship of those who need our help should motivate us to give. How great is the spiritual poverty of those who are not saved, much greater even than their material poverty, which we can help alleviate as much as possible according to God’s will. The misery of a soul imprisoned by sin is wretched. Their danger is dreadful, and nothing can help them except faith in Jesus Christ. “How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?” (Romans 10:11–15). Therefore we should all contribute our part, so that the work of saving souls across the world can continue unhindered.

We may reflect on the reality that God blesses the giver. Nowhere do we find in the Scriptures that a promise of blessing rests on those who take, but rather on those who give. “Give, and it will be given to you” (Luke 6:38a). “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). The widow of Zarephath in 1 Kings 17 only had a little oil and flour left, yet she shared it willingly with the prophet of the Lord. She was blessed for her sacrifice and obedience: she had enough throughout the extreme drought in the land, while others suffered great deprivation. Giving then has a double blessing: first, what we set in motion by giving, and second, what we personally receive by having given.

Generosity is a fruit and a sign of spiritual living. Our giving or not giving to the cause of Christ is a measure of the condition of our souls. Our attitude about money closely reflects our attitude toward God. The Christian who will not give a dime to the Lord is not worth a dime! Mary received the great testimony that, “She has done what she could” (Mark 14:8). Can the same be said of us?

Christianity that Reaches our Wallet

While Jesus walked the dusty roads of Galilee and its surroundings, He proclaimed the message of salvation to the people. It is almost alarming to discover the topic He spoke of most often. It is not love, grace, forgiveness, or even heaven. No, the topic that He addressed most was money and possessions! Someone counted the verses and found that 288 verses in the Gospels (that's one out of every ten verses!) deal directly with money. Sixteen of the 38 parables Jesus taught addressed the topic of possessions and money. The Bible has 500 verses on prayer, less than 500 verses on faith, but more than 2,000 verses on money and possessions. Why would God's Word place so much emphasis on money? Someone once said: "We will never handle anything less significant than money, nor anything more outwardly indicative of our inward spiritual condition." How we spend our money and the place our possessions have, are like an indicator dial of our spiritual condition. So what are some financial practices that point to a living faith in Jesus Christ?

Giving to the Kingdom of God is a priority.

When we gave our heart to the Lord, expanding the Kingdom of God became our priority. And when you think about it, giving money is the easiest thing we can do. It is much easier to pay for the distribution of 100 tracts than it is to hand them out on the street ourselves! But, people who give to the Kingdom of God with a cheerful attitude will feel a sense of joy and satisfaction knowing that they have invested in eternity. We often say that we can't take anything with us when we die. In the material sense that is true, but what will follow us is what we have done with the material things to produce a spiritual blessing. Tithing to the local congregation, and giving alms to the poor as we have opportunity and the Lord leads, is sending the

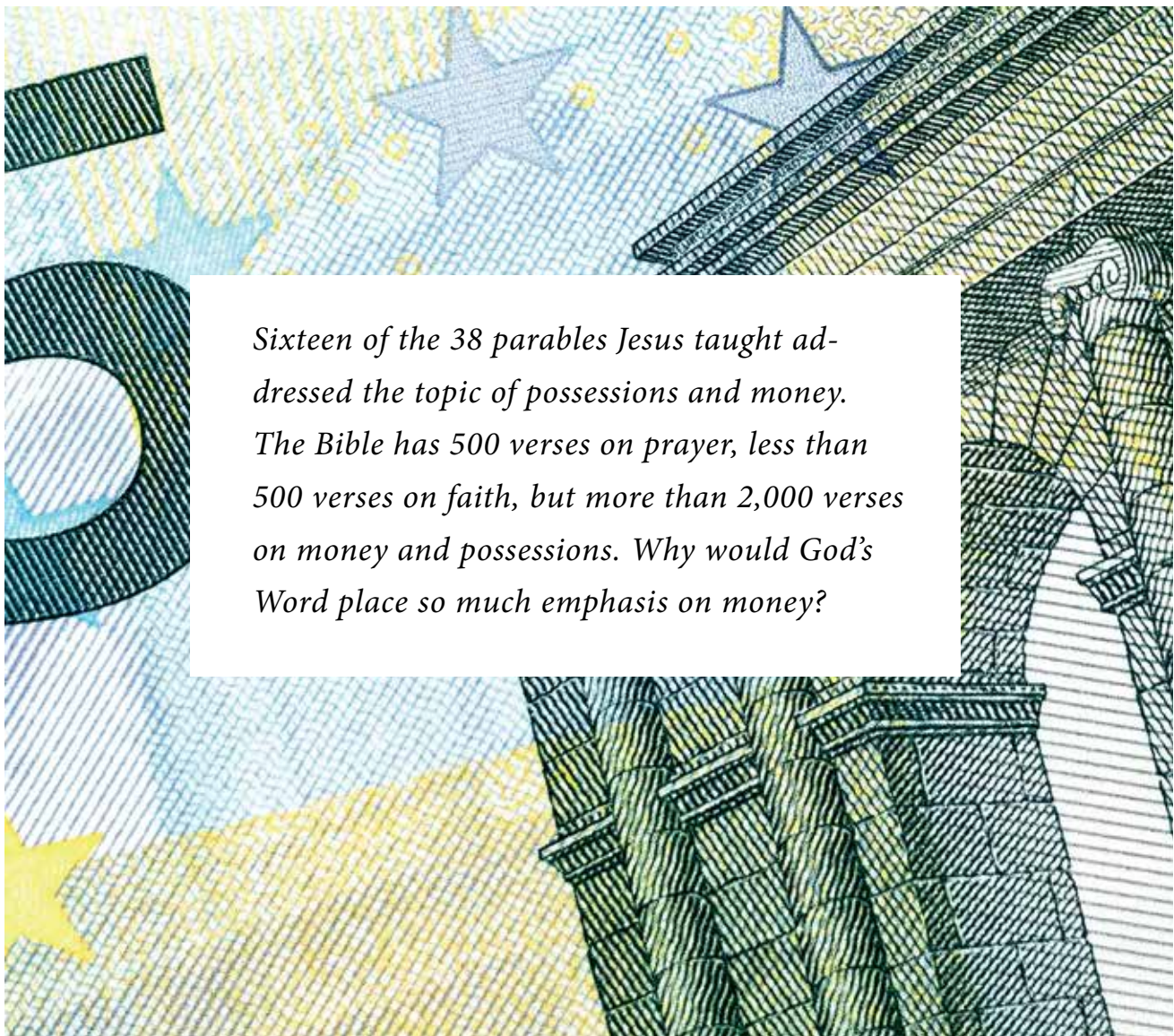
blessings ahead into eternity. "He who has pity on the poor lends to the LORD, And He will pay back what he has given" (Proverbs 19:17). God also says: "Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this,' Says the LORD of hosts, 'If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it'" (Malachi 3:10). If we withhold support of God's kingdom and the needy, we are only cutting ourselves off of God's blessings on our labor and profit.

Money is used to bless our relationships instead of selfishly hurting them.

Money does not make you happy, but mismanaging it will certainly make you unhappy.

This is especially true when you think about the role money plays in our marital relationship. It is alarming to read that finances are a major contributor in 85% of divorce cases. How did that happen? Not being honest and transparent about money that was spent? Overspending on things that weren't needed and blaming each other for high credit card bills? It is also heartbreaking to see how many siblings refuse to speak with each other after a dispute over the inheritance left by their parents. All of this can be summed up by one word: greed. The Bible warns of the consequences of this sin: "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Timothy 6:10). Loving money to the point of hurting your conscience, and neglecting your relationship with God and people, is a source of all kinds of unhappiness and sorrow.

How different the life where greed is surrendered to God, and money is used as a tool to live and to bless oth-



Sixteen of the 38 parables Jesus taught addressed the topic of possessions and money. The Bible has 500 verses on prayer, less than 500 verses on faith, but more than 2,000 verses on money and possessions. Why would God's Word place so much emphasis on money?

ers. That brings contentment to people at all levels of financial wealth.

We pay taxes not just to satisfy the laws of the government, but to obey God.

This applies regardless of who is in authority in our country. "Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor" (Romans 13:5-7). Take note that the government the Roman Christians were paying taxes to was the same government that persecuted their family members and their brothers and sisters in the Lord. Taxes are part of our Christian citizenship.

The apostle Paul stresses that we are not to obey the government only to avoid the consequences of disobey-

ing. He directs us to obey "for conscience' sake." We might get away with some things from the government's perspective, but not from God's all-knowing eyes. How many people have a guilty conscience because they cheated in their business transactions or their tax returns. These things are like a boulder of guilt on the soul when their time on earth draws to a close. Christian obedience includes honesty in our tax return.

The topic of finances in the life of a follower of Christ can be summarized with the words of Jesus in Matthew 6:33 "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." Making this verse our motivator will help us as we seek to balance our work hours, the purchases we make, and how we spend our money. It is clear from the words of Jesus that Christianity does reach our wallet!

John Reimer
Barrhead, AB

Tithing

Should Christians tithe? Tithing is frequently dismissed as a requirement of the Law. But tithing predates the Law. Abraham gave a tenth of everything as he was blessed by Melchizedek, the priest of God Most High (Genesis 14:20). Much later, God wrote tithing into the Law, as in Leviticus 27:30, “And all the tithes of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD’S. It is holy to the LORD” and in verse 32, “And concerning the tithes of the herd or the flock, of whatever passes under the rod, the tenth one shall be holy to the LORD”.

Tithing was for the support of the children of Levi. “Behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tithes in Israel as an inheritance in return for the work which they perform, the work of the tabernacle of meeting” (Numbers 18:21).

Interestingly, the Levites themselves were not excluded from tithing. The Law applied to everyone. God told Moses, “Speak thus to the Levites, and say to them: ‘When you take from the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them as your inheritance, then you shall offer up a heave offering of it to the LORD, a tenth of the tithes’” (Numbers 18:26).

So where do we stand today? Should Christians tithe? Do we have any evidence for tithing in the New Testament? I am convinced that Jesus Himself supported tithing, for in His reprimand of the teachers of the law and the Pharisees, he says, “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter (justice, mercy, and faithfulness), without neglecting the former (tithing)” (Matthew 23:23 NIV).

The Apostle Paul writes to the Corinthian congregation, “Now about the collection for God’s people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made” (1 Corinthians 16:1-2 NIV). Setting aside a sum of money, in

keeping with one’s income, implies a percentage. Given that we have a number of examples of Christians in New Testament times giving up all their possessions—that Jesus supported tithing, and the Apostle Paul taught setting aside a sum of money in keeping with one’s income—it should be clear that, as a minimum, a Christian should tithe. Indeed, I have known Christians who have regularly given more, and been richly blessed. When you give, you enable God to bless you. God’s Word says, “you shall bring out the tithes of your produce . . . that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do” (Deuteronomy 14:28,29).

Sometimes it may seem difficult to tithe. I’d like to share the advice my parents gave me when I was beginning to earn money.

1. If your paycheck is \$100, for example, work out your budget on the basis of \$90. Simply consider that the other \$10 belongs to the LORD.

2. Give regularly. Playing catch-up is painful.

3. Give your support primarily to your local church.

Not surprisingly, this advice matches that of the Apostle Paul to the churches in Galatia and Corinth! If your income is low, you may think you can’t afford to tithe—you can barely make ends meet now. Those with high incomes may see the tithe as a lot of money—too much to give away. But in Malachi 3:10-11 we read, “‘Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this,’ says the LORD of hosts, ‘If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, so that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field,’ says the LORD of hosts”.

Do you give?

- **Giving is biblical doctrine.** From beginning to end, the Bible teaches giving. God is our greatest example as the Giver of Everything, and the Author of our Salvation through his indescribable gift, Jesus.



- **Giving is an act of faith.** “Try Me now in this,’ says the LORD of hosts, ‘If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it’” (Malachi 3:10).
- **Giving is an attitude of gratitude.** “What do you have that you did not receive?” (1 Corinthians 4:7a)
- **Giving is rewarded in heaven.** In Matthew 25:40 it says, “And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you

did it to Me.” In a prior verse (34) we read, “the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’” It’s in your hands. As the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “But this I say : He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully” (2 Corinthians 9:6).

Hardy Sonnenberg
Hamilton, ON

Dangers of Wealth

Benjamin Franklin, the inventor of the lightning rod, was once asked why the ownership of earthly possessions was associated with so much trouble and worry.

A child was playing in the room. Franklin took an apple out of a basket and gave it to the child. The small hand could hardly hold the large apple. Then Franklin gave him another apple to hold in his other hand and finally a third apple that was especially nice and big. The little boy had great difficulty in hanging on to all three apples. Soon he let them fall and began to cry bitterly.

“Look!” Franklin exclaimed, “a small boy who has more wealth than he can enjoy!”

Many years ago a wealthy landowner met one of the workers out in the field. In conversation with him, he looked around with satisfaction and said: “Everything that you see around you belongs to me.”

The worker thrust his spade in the ground, took off his cap, pointed to the sky and said: “Does that belong to you too?”

What do all earthly possessions help us if we are not rich in God?

The more possessions you have,
the more worries and burdens.

God and Our Beloved Money

“But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.” (2 Corinthians 9:6-7)

In the New Testament, the word “offering” is often used in the context of fellowship. Why does an offering of money have this meaning? How is it on the same level as the fellowship of prayer and fellowship with Christ? Fellowship in the congregation consists of giving and taking. We give time, experience, ideas, understanding, and money. And we take these offerings for granted. Money is no minor matter for the congregation. This stands in direct opposition to popular opinion that claims that friendship doesn’t extend to money matters.

Reasons for Giving

In 2 Corinthians 9 and 10, Paul explains the purpose of his trips to collect offerings. He is collecting money for the suffering congregation in Jerusalem. And as always, when it comes to giving, some are immediately ready to help while others hesitate. For this reason, Paul justifies his request. He mentions three reasons:

1. Jesus gifts you with gifts that cannot be bought with money. Christ died for you. He became poor for you so that you could become rich. Christ has planted hope in our hearts and has made us members of His church. What is your offering worth compared to these gifts? The apostle does not give any numbers, not even the tenth. The tenth was instituted in the Old Israel. For us Christians, it is a useful principle. Not just a tenth of our time, a tenth of our skills, a tenth of our body belong to God: everything belongs to God. He has entrusted to us and loaned

us all things. It is our responsibility to handle them carefully and to practice faithful stewardship. Apparently, this argument alone did not convince the Corinthians.

So Paul reaches for the Old Testament: “There is one who scatters, yet increases more; and there is one who withholds more than is right, but it leads to poverty” (Proverbs 11:24). This has been proven by experience. The gap between rich and poor can lead to jealousy and bitterness. Open and honest partnerships lead to true peace. This also applies to families and to the church. The sharing of money and possessions are a part of this.

We have also experienced that you cannot outgive God. What you give you will receive many times over. Young and old have confirmed this again and again to me. God loves a cheerful giver. He cares for him. The emphasis is on “cheerful.” One person gives money with a grim face and clenched teeth. Another wants to buy esteem and respect with his offering. A third gives after much urging and pleading. But the best attitude is the cheerful one. This applies to what Paul wrote to the believers in Corinth: Everyone must decide for himself what he will give. No one should feel compelled. No one has a right to demand money from someone. Whoever gives should think of God’s promise: He who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully” (2 Corinthians 9:6). Whoever gives should give with joy and a thankful heart!

2. Paul names the second reason for giving: We need money. Without financial assistance, the work of the



church cannot go on. This is just as obvious today as it was in the year A.D. 50 in Corinth.

3. Finally, Paul names a third reason: thanks to God and intercessory prayer. “So two good things will result from this ministry of giving—the needs of the believers in Jerusalem will be met, and they will joyfully express their thanks to God. . . . And they will pray for you with deep affection because of the overflowing grace God has given to you” (2 Corinthians 9:12,14 NLT).

Practical Application

We thank the loyal givers for their offerings. Without offerings, we could not exist. It is no secret: We have many older parishioners, pensioners, and single people. Everyone should know that no dollar is given out thoughtlessly. The congregation’s account is transparent: expenditures and revenues are disclosed.

We observe that many young people do not give anything. No one expects a huge amount of money from them. But even if it is something small, it is a sign that they participate in the work of the Lord. Offering has to be learned.

There are also brothers and sisters who do not allow their names to be listed on a ledger. They lay their money in the offering plate without giving their names. Offerings in a congregation are handled by the treasurer,

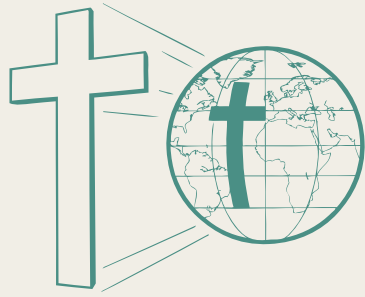
not because he is curious and wants to snoop around in others’ wallets. Part of a budget includes an overview and the possibility to plan and to foresee a little. This applies especially when regular payments need to be made.

We also have a few brothers and sisters who give a lot of money to other organizations. Often, the business transactions of these organizations cannot be verified. Usually, they have a large administration, which costs a lot. Because these organizations always plead and send requests for money, we are deceived and help out.

Our financial responsibility belongs first to the local church. We are accountable to God that funds are available to spread the gospel and to help people, when possible.

The responsibilities of the church were often undervalued because we do not advertise much. In addition, the *Evangeliums Posaune*, *Foundation of Faith*, and other publications are, in part, sent free of charge. This is supported from within and out of the country, for it belongs to the Great Commission of our Lord.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us remember that we have our mission and that we can better work and help when we pursue one goal. Therefore, let us do what we can. There are few days left to save souls. May the Lord give His rich blessings to that, and He will be a rich rewarder.



Radio Program Message of Salvation

Friedrich Krebs, Kitchener (CA)

Meager Harvest –Hard Bread

In Micah 6:14-15, God speaks of the fact that people can eat without being satisfied. They can sow a crop but not reap a harvest, and they can make wine but not drink it.

“You shall eat, but not be satisfied . . . You shall sow, but not reap . . . And make sweet wine, but not drink wine” (Micah 6:14-15).

These verses do not have a happy message. They speak of meager harvests and scarce income. This has happened in the past and still happens today! God does not need to give us a rich harvest year after year or an eighty and hundredfold crop yield. He can withdraw His hand and just allow a meager harvest.

A meager harvest should teach us that a rich harvest is not to be taken for granted. “God’s blessing gained, all is obtained,” is a true and beautiful proverb. We should seriously consider this again.

There is a more serious lesson that Joseph gave his brothers. We read about it in Genesis 45. In the land of Canaan, a severe famine had occurred. The anxious father, Jacob, sent his sons to Egypt to buy grain. Many years before they had sold their brother, Joseph, because they envied him. Now they traveled to Egypt and unexpectedly met their brother, who had become one of the top royal advisors in the land. When he saw his brothers standing before him, he burst into tears. He said to them: “I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold into Egypt.” They were dismayed! But Joseph said: “But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve

life. For these two years the famine has been in the land, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting” (Genesis 45:4-6).

Not only may the harvest be a meager one every so often, but it is a possibility that sometimes there may not be a harvest at all. If a harvest should fail, is there anything that clever scientists could accomplish with their modern technology and machines?

It was after the harvest. On a quiet pathway, a pastor walked up to a village. He always had an openness about him and a joyful heart. He noticed a shepherd who was leading his flock across the road and onto a field. It may have been about two hundred sheep that he saw before him. But his gaze was mainly directed to the shepherd. “He must be a very rich man,” he thought. He noticed that the man looked quite downcast. He quickly decided to approach him and find out more about him. “You see, I am responsible for my flock and the hay harvest was very meager. How am I going to get my sheep through the winter?” he said. “I won’t have a good income from the wool since it is hard to sell.”

Sympathetically the pastor asked him: “Has one of your sheep ever died of hunger?” “No,” was the answer. “They know that their shepherd cares for his sheep!”

Now the pastor had the opportunity to direct the shepherd’s thoughts to Psalm 23, where David prayed:

“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul.” Then he mentioned another scripture: “casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7). The troubled shepherd was encouraged. His worries faded and he thanked the pastor for his help. Yes, it is natural that meager crops can give rise to concerns. But our refuge in God is and remains our best help in all our difficulties.

We may have heard of the difficulties and hardships of mountain farmers. They work the grain fields in the high mountain regions of Europe. If the early and late rains are scarce, then the growth of the wheat under the scorching sun is stunted. Someone reported: “The mountain farmers have a hard time. Bringing in the harvest is difficult. They still bake their bread in old fashioned ovens. They rarely bake and the bread is hard. Eating hard bread is not hard but having no bread, that is hard!”

We are very indebted to our heavenly father for our daily bread. Let us remember Psalm 50:23: “Whoever of-

fers praise glorifies Me; and to him who orders his conduct aright, I will show the salvation of God.” Let us never forget to be thankful!

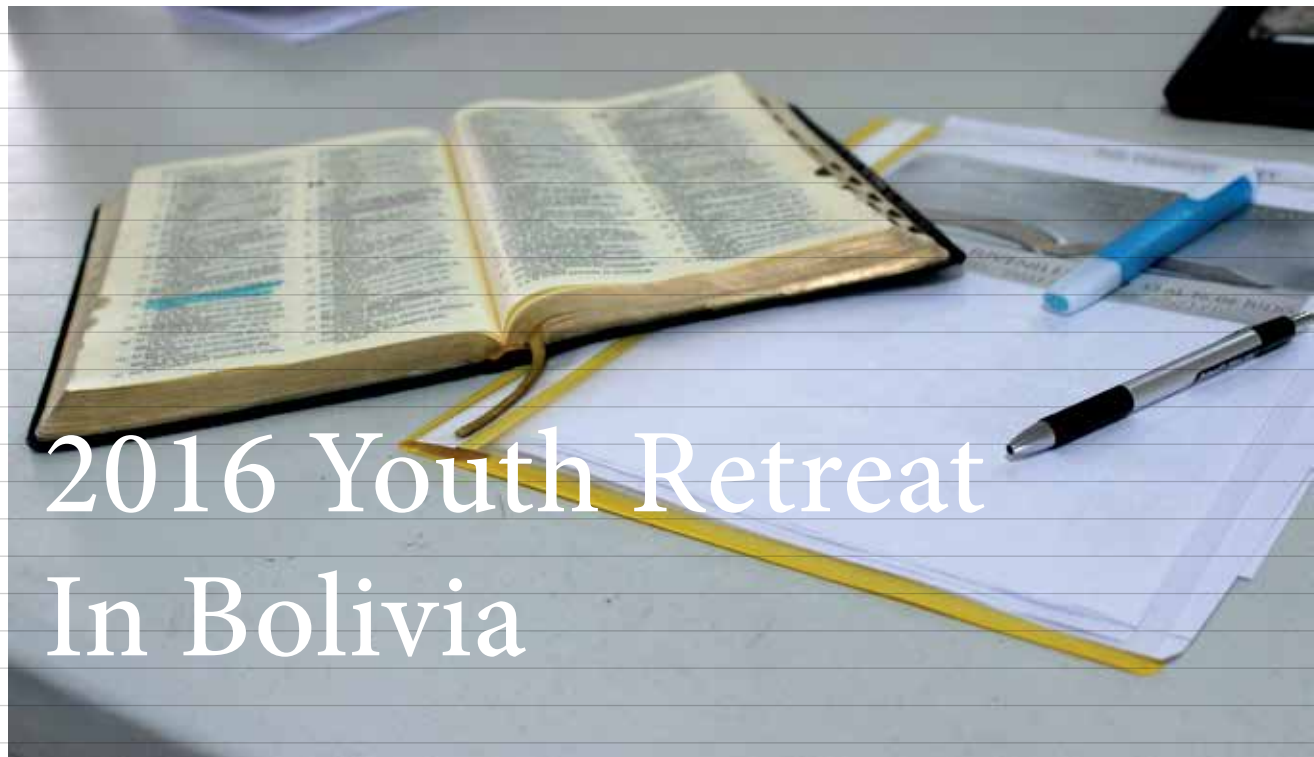
In our country the harvest is usually very good. This ensures our prosperity, does it not? Repeatedly during the day, we sit down at the table and not only eat what we have but also that which we have chosen! Our Lord deserves a double amount of thanks from us!

Many years ago, a certain farming community had the custom that the last cartload of the harvest should not be fully loaded so that all participants could still find room to ride on the cart. When the cart entered the village they all began to sing the well known hymn with a joyful heart: “Now thank we all our God.”

Can this thankful singing still be heard today? What a pity that we have lost some of these beautiful customs! Perhaps God must send us meager harvests and give us hard bread again!

We would like to wish everyone a blessed and reflective Thanksgiving!





2016 Youth Retreat In Bolivia

I am very grateful that I had the opportunity to participate in this year's Youth Retreat in Bolivia. It took place from July 13-15 in the church in Valle Esperanza. About 40 young people from Bolivia and Argentina came together and experienced a special time of spiritual edification.

We started in the morning at 8:00 a.m. with a breakfast. This was followed by a morning devotional, which was led by one of the participants. Every day, 4 seminar sessions were scheduled. We were well taken care of in-between sessions by the brothers and sisters of the congregation. On Friday night, together with other brothers and sisters, we performed a short program in a rehabilitation center.

The seminars were conducted by the brothers Gerry Mielke (Canada), Gerhard Thiessen (Bolivia), Peter Goertzen (Bolivia), Roland Stieben (Bolivia) and Manfredo Günter (Argentina).

Bro. Mielke spoke on the topic "Grace—Can you reject God's grace?" Based on real-life examples, the Bible shows us that it is possible. We see it, for example, in the life of Demas, Saul, and Judas. It can even go so far that people can no longer find access to God's grace. However, if we faithfully cling to God, He will not let us fall. This is also confirmed in God's Word (Hebrews 3:6, 14). In John 10:28, Jesus Himself says that no one can snatch us out of His hand. But if we sin knowingly, as children

of God, we are separated as a branch from the vine (John 15:1-2, 6) and run the risk of scorning God's grace.

Bro. Günter spoke on Gideon. We looked at his calling in Judges 6. Just as God called Gideon into service, he calls each one of us. Gideon was an ordinary person like us. In Judges 6:15b, we read that Gideon did not see himself as suitable for service. Maybe we feel that way sometimes too. There are others who can do it better. The fact is that we will always find people who can do it better. But that's no excuse. God expects our best. God wants to use us, as young people who are willing to stand up for the truth. God expects total obedience from us.

"What are the keys to the kingdom of heaven?" This was another topic by Bro. Mielke. He demonstrated from the Bible that it is this knowledge that shows us how to get to heaven. In Mark 1:15b Jesus says: "Repent, and believe in the Gospel." By faith we are saved. Jesus entrusted His disciples with the responsibility to proclaim this knowledge. If we have this knowledge today and do not share it with others, then we figuratively lock heaven for them.

Another topic from Bro. Mielke was "The Holy Trinity." The Bible shows us in the Old and New Testaments (for example, Isaiah 44:6 or 1 Timothy 2:5), that there is only one God. Moreover, it teaches that Jesus is also God, because Jesus has the same characteristics as God. He is eternal, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient—

like God. The same applies to the Holy Spirit: He is eternal, omnipresent, omniscient, etc. Although all three Persons have divine characteristics and may be referred to as God, that does not mean that they are three different gods. They are One. Some passages that allow us to recognize this are, for example, 2 Corinthians 6:6, John 10:30 and 14:23 and Ephesians 3:17. Although we cannot completely grasp all the details with our minds, the Bible shows that it must be so.

Bro. Goertzen spoke on the “Three Stages of Wisdom.” We looked at three ways in which we can gain wisdom. First, through the experiences of our youth. Secondly, by studying the lives of other people (for example, David, Samson, and Judas, among others) and learning from them. And thirdly: by letting God’s Word speak to us. God wants to speak to us through His Word. We should never disdain the wisdom of His words.

Bro. Mielke spoke to us on the topic “baptism.” Baptism is one of the ordinances of the Bible. It does not make us a child of God. It also cannot cleanse us from

our sin (1 Peter 3:21). It symbolizes new life from God (2 Corinthians 5:17). Through immersion, we show that we died to sin and were then resurrected to a new life in Christ. It is a sign of obedience to God.

Bro. Thiessen spoke on “self-denial.” Following Jesus means denying oneself (Mark 8:34-38). This is not an easy way, but it will be rewarded in the end. Self-denial means to resist the will of our own “self,” to take up the cross and follow Jesus no matter what (Romans 8:31-39).

Bro. Stieben dealt with the topic “Modern Idolatry.” Is there idolatry today? Can it be possible that we have idols in our lives? Yes! Idols are things that are more important to us than God. Sports, selfies, social media, and much more can be idols for us.

God was noticeably present. Something special during this time was the fellowship with other Christians. My wish is that the blessings will remain and bear fruit for eternity.

Maria Rempel
Steinbach, MB



Don't Come So Late

A wealthy farmer lay on his deathbed; a minister sat at his side. A confession had taken place—interrupted frequently by sobs and sighs. The dying man had received forgiveness through Jesus Christ's compassion, but what deeply troubled and humbled him now was the thought of his wasted life.

As a boy, he had listened to his rich uncle whose heart was attached to his money. "Save!"—"Scrape together!"—"Give nothing away!"—The boy had heard these words hundreds of times, and they had impressed themselves upon his heart. He had learned how to hoard from the old scrooge, and all his thoughts and efforts were about acquiring and obtaining more material wealth.

It only got worse when he inherited his uncle's possessions after his death. With one stroke, he became a rich man. People called him a "lucky child," but they would have been more correct to call him an "unlucky child," because there was no happiness or peace, no joy or contentment evident in his life. So the years passed,

and before he knew what was happening, he had become an old man.

God finally admonished him through a long and painful illness: "Set your house in order, for you must die! Why have you worked your whole life for yourself, the world, and foreign idols, and yet stood idly by for heaven? Repent yet in your eleventh hour." The farmer took the message to heart, and God in His mercy gave him repentance and faith.

He willed his entire fortune to the work of God's kingdom. It was his request that God might accept that which he had withheld for so long and had misused in the service of sin and vanity. "Oh God, for Christ's sake forgive me for only realizing Your will so late, and waiting to come to You until I was a dying man! Oh, how different my life could have been if I had acknowledged You in my youth and served you! Oh, Son of God, be merciful to me and have compassion on me!" That was the penitent cry of an old man in his last living hours, and God heard him for Christ's sake. The farmer died in peace.

Wanting to Get Rich

A man who had suddenly become very wealthy once said to his pastor, "As long as I was poor and had only a small, monthly income, I did not find giving to be very difficult. But when the money begins to increase, and can be deposited in the bank, you cling with all your heart, to the point that you can't let hold of your grip." In a similar way, one woman made the following confession: "When I still had a penny pouch, I had a heart of gold. But now that I have a gold pouch, I only have a heart fit for pennies."

Through such words we can acknowledge the power that striving for money can have on a person. And there are many who want to become rich. Why do they get so uptight about it year after year, day after day? What are they thinking about day and night? For what purpose

are they racking their brains and running their feet sore? Why are they fighting with their neighbors? To what end are they deadening their conscience and compromising their salvation? They want to become rich; they are searching for gold, wanting to strike it rich. If they can't find it here, they'll dig for it there. If they can't pursue it honestly, they'll do so dishonestly.

Protect yourself from wanting to become rich! "But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Timothy 6:9–10).

Thankful for Everything

A week of sunny days passed and Sunday morning dawned clear and bright. Miss Janice's Sunday School class gathered once again for their weekly lesson. The students had just finished singing when the door opened and Kyle hobbled in. Immediately the children asked him what had happened to his leg. "I was playing soccer with my friends on Friday. I had the ball when a player on the other team tried to get it from me. He missed the ball and kicked my leg. Now I can only limp around." His remarks were followed by a chorus of sympathetic groans from the other children.

"Boys and girls, it's time for our morning prayer," Miss Janice announced, calling the children to order. The class grew silent. The children took turns praying. Again, Kyle prayed last. "Thank you, God, for all the great friends I play with," Kyle said. "And God—thank you that my leg was kicked

and not my head. Amen." The class echoed Kyle's prayer with a joyful "amen."

What about you? Are you thankful even when things are not going your way, or do you grumble and complain? In 1 Thessalonians 5:18 we read, "in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." Begin today by thanking God for all the good things He has done for you. Ask Him to help you be thankful when you are tempted to complain. Often our problems are really "blessings in disguise." But in order to receive the blessings, we need to pay less attention to the difficulties, look for God's blessings, and thank Him for them.

Juanita Wiebe,
Hamilton, ON

*This story is based on her actual experiences
in her Sunday School class.*



If You Would Believe

Part 10

Compiled by Hartmut Sonnenberg

The Lord Revealed it

As I look back now many years later, the following two personal experiences were my fledging of the nest - they prepared me to fly on my own spiritually. The first reminds me of God's care and provision and greatly strengthened my faith. The second was an unforgettable demonstration of God's Word put into practice.

In my final year of studies in Electrical Engineering at the University of Alberta, I had decided to apply for admission to three highly regarded Graduate Schools in the United States. I discussed my intent with one of my professors, who advised me to replace one of my three choices with another University that did not have quite such high entrance requirements, so that I would at least be assured of continuing my studies – that application would be my lifeboat.

During this time, I felt completely overwhelmed. "Father," I said, looking for support. "I spend 28 hours per week in class. I carry an enormous homework load. Additionally I am preparing for mid-term exams. Monday evening is youth choir practice; Wednesday is prayer meeting; Friday is youth meeting; Saturday is men's choir; Sunday morning and evening there is church. And now, in addition to all that I need to complete and mail the applications, each of which requires a unique long essay. And what if I don't get accepted at any of these

universities? Wouldn't I be better off studying more thoroughly for the mid-term exams?

Early one morning as I was working at my desk, there was a knock on the door of my study.

"My son, may I come in?" father asked.

"Of course!"

"I have news for you."

"Yes? What kind of news?"

"You will be going to Stanford!" he surprised me.

"How do you know that?"

"I have prayed about it, and the Lord has revealed it to me."

"However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, ... He will tell you things to come. (John 16:13)

Over the years, we had learned that when dad said, "God has shown me," without fail, it happened that way. He would often say: "I have prayed through." That meant that God had either given him a specific answer, as in this case, or that he had come to an inner peace, knowing that the matter was now in God's hands.

And so, with God's grace I completed the applications and then waited for an answer. Within weeks a slim letter arrived, bearing the grim news: "We regret to inform you..." One down! The following week, a second letter arrived bearing the same message. If already my 'lifeboat' application had been turned down, what possibility was there that



I would be admitted to Stanford University with its high entrance requirements?

The weeks seemed to move at glacial speed, in the absence of an answer from Stanford. But as long as there was not yet a rejection there was hope. And didn't father say that God had revealed to him that I would be admitted to Stanford?

By the time I had completed my final exams, it was two months since I had received the rejection letters from the other two universities. Father accompanied me on the long cross-country drive to the Bell Northern Research Centre in Ottawa, where I had accepted a summer position. Before we left, I instructed mother to open the hotly anticipated letter from Stanford as soon as it arrived and to communicate its contents by telephone.

Many days later, the letter from Stanford arrived at home, and was immediately forwarded to me in Ottawa. Holding the letter in my hands, I could barely contain myself. It was a thick letter, suggesting that it would contain more than a rejection. With trembling hands I opened the envelope and began to read: "I am happy to inform you that our Committee on Admissions has provisionally admitted you..."

It was like a flame to the fuse: Admitted!
- Admitted, despite the failure of the lifeboat -
Admitted to Stanford, just as God had shown father months earlier.

"But there is a God in heaven
who reveals secrets,
and He has made known ...
what will be"
(Daniel 2:28)

In my euphoria I had almost forgotten a second letter in the Stanford envelope: "We are pleased to inform you that it has become possible for us to offer you a research assistantship," it began. I was stunned. I had not applied for financial support. How could it be that I should receive financial assistance covering all costs when I had not even made an application? What a merciful God who knows our needs! He enabled not only admission to Stanford, but arranged the financing.

"Your Father knows what you need before you ask Him."

"Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine ...

To Him be glory... for ever and ever!"

(Matthew 6:8; Ephesians 3:20,21 NIV)

Hartmut Sonnenberg
Hamilton, ON

How Can We Support God's Work in Our Time?

When we speak of supporting, we think of propping up, through which something being propped up is held high. Many supports are needed to bear a heavy load. This is also true in relation to God's work during this difficult time. Some of the pillars in the church are bending under the burden, but they endure, they do not break. Yet others fall or merely hang onto what they once supported and let themselves be carried along. We are to be supports in the work of our God. We surely all want the life-giving truth to be shared in various ways, through the spoken and written word, in the future as it has been in the past.

The question then is raised: Can we do that? It is true that some churches have heavy burdens to carry. Some may feel: "It is impossible to contribute more to the general support of God's work." The twelve scouts who traveled through the Promised Land all agreed that it was a good land. As proof, they brought along the fruits of it. They also agreed that it would not be easy to conquer. There were truly obstacles and difficulties that needed to be overcome. All twelve agreed that a strong nation inhabited this land and that they had large, secure cities. They had also seen giants that were not to be dismissed. However, two of the scouts saw the possibility of overcoming the obstacles and they said: "Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it" (Numbers 13:30). The other ten, however, discouraged the people. They only saw the obstacles. Joshua and Caleb saw the obstacles as well, but they saw more than that: they saw the Almighty God who had promised to be with them. Who had the correct viewpoint? The ten

or the two? We know that the minority with their trust in God was correct. They knew: "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31).

If all of them had immediately been like Joshua and Caleb, full of courage and trusting God, victory would have been celebrated much sooner. Due to their unbelief, the Israelites had to wander in the desert for 40 years before victory could be won.

Can we support God's work in this age? It must be accepted that it is a great task and that there are obstacles and difficulties that need to be overcome. Can we however, not be as sure as Joshua and Caleb once were that we can overcome everything and have victory because the Lord is with us?

What do we need in order to support the Lord's work? Some say: "All that is needed is more money." That may be true, but more than money and possessions is needed: God wants us. We cannot satisfy God with a certain amount of money. He says: "My son, my daughter, give me your heart!" He wants our hearts. If He possesses the heart of a person in truth and deed, He also has his hands, feet, eyes, ears, will, his love, and his property.

Paul praises the generosity of the churches in Macedonia. They were not wealthy. They were actually quite poor, but they were willing. "In a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing." What was the secret for their joy in sacrifice? The apostle tells us: "They first gave themselves to the Lord" (2 Corinthians 8:1-5).



So how can we support the Lord's work? What should and what do we want to give? First of all ourselves, however poor or rich we may be. The more we give of ourselves in this way, the richer we become. Christlike generosity is an important part of the Christian life. It can be said that if someone's religion does not cost them a cent, it is also not worth a cent. However, generosity alone is no Christian life. Above all, we need to support the Lord's work through our lives and dedication.

For all those who know the Lord, it is hardly necessary to point out how important it is to support His work through prayer. Prayer is a crucial support. It is not primarily the amount we give, but more important-

ly, how dear it is to our heart, how important it is to us. If God's kingdom really lays upon our heart, then our love for the Lord will encourage and drive us to sacrifice and pray for it.

If God's cause has truly become important to us, then we will not wonder how great a burden we are able to carry, how comparatively light it has become, and how the carrying of the burden has strengthened our inner being. Therefore, dear brethren, let us all put our hand to the plough and serve: "As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4:10).

T.W.

Is It the Same With You?

A Christian man asked another, "If you had 100 sheep, would you give 50 for God's work?"—"Yes," he answered, "I would do that. I would be willing to give 50."

His friend asked again, "If you had 100 cows, would you be willing to give 50 for God's purpose?"—"Oh yes, I would do that," was the prompt reply.

"But you wouldn't do it if you had 100 horses, right?"—"Oh yes, I would. Believe me!"

"But, if you had two pigs, would you be willing to give up one?"—The man's expression quickly changed and he immediately retorted, "No, I would not do that. You know that I have two pigs. Why would you ask me that?"

He was willing to give what he did not own, but he would not give what he had.—Is it the same with you?

God Loves a Cheerful Giver

Many years ago in Germany, there lived a man named Bugenhagen. He had a small plot of land that typically only produced enough to provide for him and his grandchild, whom he had taken in after the child's parents had died.

And yet, every year he would bring four to five silver coins from his earnings for the mission. Each time he brought his donation, he was ashamed that it was not more. He wanted to give a greater amount, even just once.

He tilled his small acreage in the fall and then again the following spring. Then he asked the Lord in a simple and childlike manner if He would be so good to double his harvest this year, as he believed it to be his last. He wanted to give fifty to seventy silver coins to the mission, and God could indeed easily do this, for He Himself had said, "But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty" (Matthew 13:8). Mightn't He give him this final joy, as he would surely die soon?—So he prayed.

Many people might laugh at such a prayer, but the Lord did not laugh. He said "yes" and "amen." The old man brought the mission fifty-five silver coins of his acreage's earnings that following November.