

Christian Leadership 3 – Week 10

Being Spiritual Influencers for Financial Generosity

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Introduction

This teaching is directly from Gary DeLashmutt's presentation at Xenos' 2014 "Vision and Stewardship Meeting."
[Patch: I believe it provides an excellent guideline for leading in this area and would be useful in cell group and personal discipleship settings. Note: this was another substantial overlap – the two weeks on this topic in CM 3 provide the principles and guidelines of stewardship and the biblical convictions behind it.] All those attending this meeting are believers in Jesus Christ and want to be part of the ministry of the church, including financial giving.

We can and should all be spiritual influencers of others, toward financial stewardship and generosity. This is an important role for home church leaders but is not reserved ONLY for them. All of us, through whom the Spirit works, can play this important role in the lives of others.

Because the pledge campaign just finished this past Monday, we have a unique opportunity to reflect on how well we led in this area. And because of His grace – our only qualification to lead at all – we can have the courage to do so with honesty.

Let's consider some biblical principles for how we can be spiritual influencers.

1. We need to share God's vision for His church!

We need to share His vision for His church and how stewarding His money will help to accomplish that. Paul does this in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 by providing a vision of how God will work through their financial generosity.

[In order to do this, we need to think through some of the incredible ways God is working in the church and the various initiatives presented by the elders and division coordinators]

2. Ask ourselves/others: "Is my giving to this part of God's work a *current* expression of faith in the Lord?"

One of the important things about giving to God is not only that it is an expression of gratitude, but that it is an expression of our TRUST in the Lord to take care of us!

C.S. LEWIS: in answer to the question of "How much give...?" – [paraphrased]

"There is no simple answer. But if our giving does not cut into our lifestyle and we do not feel a sense of limitation in other things we could do, then I should say our giving is probably not sufficient."

This is something we should ponder each year and even during year as consider our giving. Many of us make pledge commitments that roll over automatically. This is good (I use it) but we may miss an opportunity to get before the Lord in our current situation and ask Him, "*Is my current level of giving an expression of my trust in You to take care of me financially and materially?*"

We should not say to everyone "We should up our pledge this year!"

But we should ask ourselves and others, "*Is it significant in this sense of requiring faith?*"

I know God gives us moral authority to influence others in this area when we have first gotten before Him and asked, listened to, and acted on His answer to this question.

3. To be a spiritual influencer, we must be convinced *from the heart* that our giving and the giving of the people we are influencing is for our and their GOOD!

NOT, "this is just a pragmatic issue" (budget, bills to cover & need to get people to share the load). When it comes to being a spiritual influencer, we must believe from the heart that this area of giving God's love – like ALL areas of giving God's love – is not only for God's glory and for the good of the people the money serves – BUT IT IS FOR OUR GOOD, TOO!

There is a boldness that comes in calling others to be more generous when we are convinced in our heart that we are giving them an opportunity to spiritually grow and flourish!

If we aren't convinced of this, we'll either resort to pressure tactics or be timid in an unhealthy way – feeling like “I'm just trying to get people's money!”

Consider some of the things the Bible says about this area:

- a. Self-giving love leads to real happiness! **Acts 20:35** – “*It's more blessed (truly fulfilling) to give than it is to receive.*” The context of that statement was financial generosity. Paul reminds the Ephesians that “*We worked with our own hands to support ourselves and workers!*”(v. 34) “Why do we do this?” Paul says because we know it will lead to true fulfillment for US who are generous in this way.
- b. Financial generosity protects us from materialism – Paul: **1 Timothy 6**: “*remind the rich...to be generous and ready to share*”– which most of us are (by global standards). Remember, this is juxtaposed to the earlier admonition, reminding them to flee from materialism. I have longed believe that my giving to His work is a crucial part of me not being ensnared by materialism.
- c. Financial giving leads to additional ministry opportunities! The Bible teaches that being a good financial steward is a SMALL area.

Luke 16:¹⁰ “He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much.

The context of this is the stewardship of our finances. If faithful here the Lord will give more opportunities to be faithful in MORE important areas! These may be additional evangelism opportunities as the context in Luke implies, discipleship, and other kinds of ministry opportunities.

He will make our lives more fruitful as we are faithful in this small area! Jesus is pointing to a link between these two things!

Acts 4:32ff – As the early church was being faithful in financial generosity God empowered the apostles to preach in a special way. Luke is pointing out just as Jesus had said, that as they were faithful in this little area, God would provide greater opportunity to be used by Him.

- d. We must remind ourselves and others of the PROMISE that God says, “As you are faithful in this area, I will take care of My people who are financially generous.”

2 Corinthians 9:⁸ And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed...

¹⁰ Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness;

Of course we don't believe what the health and wealth gospel folk say, who pervert this: “Give \$1,000 to pastor, he'll pray over it and God will grant you even more!” That's just personal greed on both ends – the pastor and the giver.

BUT we don't want to miss the biblical principle here either:
“GOD WILL PROVIDE SEED FOR THE SOWER”

EG – Gary raised his kids to believe this and reminds home church of this. God will give us jobs to enable us to be good givers. A lot of people in his home church are digging out of debt and trying to be good financial stewards – we don't want them to lose sight of the fact that as they make a commitment in faith to be generous, that God will help them accomplish this.

All of those things and really many more are emphasized in scripture that we can trust God to take care of us in this area as we are faithful in our giving – that it is for our good and those we are influencing.

4. Should be willing, as the Spirit leads, to share WHAT we give...

...or, share about the financial generosity of others (naturally, only with their permission). This is opposed to the superspiritual take that we should be utterly secret about what we give (misusing Mt. 6). This is not what Jesus

meant – “Never under any circumstances should you ever share what you give!” Or else Luke is contradicting Jesus’ command in Acts 4 as he talks about the extraordinary generosity of people like Barnabas!

How did they know that? Why did they tell other people?

Sadly, we can BOAST about this area or any area of our Christian life to puff selves up.

But sometimes the Lord leads us to share what we are actually giving – or what someone else is doing – because He works through that to stimulate someone else’s faith!

EG (of Doug’s) Den – in cell (context: inductive of Ephesians; in chap 4) “working with our own hands in order to have something to give.” We discussed principles of financial stewardship and Den shared what he made and what gave - his salary was \$28,000 and he gave 11%. I made about \$80,000 more than him and was single, and giving \$20.00/month – more than I ever had in my life and believing I was really trusting the Lord and furthering His work...

Sometimes, the Lord wants us to share these details and will use that greatly.

5. We should remind ourselves and others that our attitude toward giving is more important than the amount.

I see a lot of people in our home church digging out of debt. *“I have little money and so little to give, what does it really matter?”*

I remind them, it does matter to the Lord. The Lord looks at the attitude with which we give. If we do so **out of gratitude** for what He has done **and faith in Him to take care of us**, it pleases Him. He regards that as more significant than the amount (remember the widow’s two coins, compared with those who brought in wheelbarrows full of money out of their abundant riches - Mk 12/Lk 21).

When there is sacrifice involved in our giving and we give with gratitude and faith, it pleases the Lord. Some of us need to be reminded of this and remind others of this before the penny drops in order to be able to live as a committed giver in this area.

6. We should be willing to issue Spirit-led personal challenges.

We all have a meeting in our home church where we lay out the vision and call for stewardship. We want to lay out these biblical principles and the vision we’ve received. Our people need to be challenged in a corporate setting and I agree with that completely. And they need reminders especially during the pledge campaign.

But sometimes God also puts a burden on our hearts for specific people in our group. Perhaps we know that a spiritual battle is raging in those persons over this area and we know that this is an important step of faith for them to take. The Spirit is prompting us to challenge them privately in this area.

This is NOT button-holing people in this area or pressuring them.

For all the reasons above it is an act of love and for their own spiritual well-being. This is responding to the Spirit’s leading and brings Him pleasure as we are willing to consider the importance He places on this area and to bring that to the attention of individuals.

[Gary]: I’ve had people through the years come back and thank me for this. Not about me, but about the Spirit!

Conclusion

Remind yourself regularly of these principles so your heart remains where it needs to. And be a good spiritual influencer of others in this important area, for His sake.