

The Gospel Changes Everything

The gospel is the good news that God has done (and is continuing to do) the work to rescue and renew creation. Jesus walked fully submitted to the Father in every way, so that we who have not submitted to the Father, might have his perfect submission and righteousness in exchange for our rebellion and sin. Jesus took the wrath of God against our sin on himself when he went to the cross, so that we might be forgiven and redeemed. When Jesus rose again from the dead, he not only proved that he had conquered sin and death, but also that He lives in order to take possession of what is rightly his – his Bride, the Church.

A New, Good Master

The Scriptures are very clear, “We are not our own, we have been bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).” This could seem like very bad news if we don’t know what God is like. To be owned by a sinful and evil master would be a horrible reality, but to belong to Jesus is wonderful news. As Jesus’ servants, we are no longer slaves to sin, death, or anything that doesn’t give life abundantly. Jesus came to give us life and give it abundantly.

Everyone is either a slave to Jesus or another master. When it comes to money, many of us live as though we are still in bondage to it. We hoard money; we become consumed with money; we fear losing money; we are anxious that we will not make enough money. And all along, instead of being free to use money for God’s purposes, we become mastered by it and enslaved to it. Therefore we don’t walk “in line with the gospel” in the area of money and giving (Galatians 2:14).

When we fully believe and embrace the gospel, we are reminded that God is for us and will provide us with everything we need for life and godliness. When we believe the gospel, we approach money and giving very differently. We realize that we don’t really own anything because everything we have is God’s. However, we also realize that we really do own everything because everything is ours in Jesus Christ! We can rest in the awareness that we are the wealthiest people on the planet.

The Bible says that for our sakes Jesus became poor so that in his poverty we could become rich (2 Corinthians 8:9). When we believe that we have been adopted into the family of God and are truly heirs of the world, then we also become willing to empty ourselves for the sake of others. As Jesus was raised and seated in the heavenly realms, so we are too. We have nothing to lose because everything that is his is also ours, and it is securely held in heaven for us. The reality is, none of us is ever really sacrificing anything when we give money, time, possessions, or talents. We don't really own it—it's all his. What we are really doing is using all that is his for his glory. It's not a sacrifice, it's a privilege!

Some Basics on Giving

- Our giving must be first of all be informed by the gospel and led by the Spirit—we are not giving to gain approval, nor do we give begrudgingly. Our giving should be a joyful response to what God has given us in Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 8)
- Everything we have comes from God and belongs to God (James 1:17; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Rom. 12:1-2). Therefore, we are not really sacrificing anything when we give.
- We are to seek first God's Kingdom (the first fruits principle), not worrying about what will eat or drink, but trusting that he will take care of our needs. (Matthew 6:33)
- We are to give generously. (2 Corinthians 8)
- Giving benefits the giver, not just the beneficiary (2 Corinthians 8). It is actually good for us to give because we learn to trust in God; we release our grip on things; we experience God's abundant grace more; we grow in grace and experience greater joy.
- We are to be a slave to Jesus and his righteousness alone—not to anyone or anything. It was for freedom that Christ set us free. (Galatians 5:1)
- Although we are no longer under the Old Covenant law, we use the tithe as a tutor—It shows us where we might begin in our giving (10% is a good place to start), and it serves as an indicator of where our hearts are still in need of gospel transformation (if 10% seems like a lot, perhaps God still needs to work on our hearts).
- We release our giving into the hands of local church leadership—Israel was instructed to give to the temple leadership, and the Church gave to the apostles or elders to do with it as they saw best. (Numbers 18:27-29; Leviticus 23:9-14; Acts 4:32-37, 6:1).

- We also are to support those who serve us in the equipping and training of the gospel. (1 Corinthians 9:1-14; Galatians 6:6-7; 1 Timothy 5:17-25)
- The gospel calls us to grow in grace—not just the receiving of it, but the giving of it as well. We should grow in our giving as we more fully embrace the gospel. This means we increasingly give to our local church AND to the needs we see around us in our community. (Matthew 25:31-46; Acts 2:44-45, 3:34-35)

Some Diagnostic Questions

If you want to do some self-examination regarding how the gospel has gripped your heart in the area of giving ask yourself these questions:

1. If I give money away, when do I give it?—After I've paid all of my bills or before?

- + The principal of first fruits informs us that our faith in God to provide leads us to give to him first. (Leviticus 23:9-14; Deuteronomy 18:1-5) .
- + God had commanded the people to give their firstborn to him as well. (Exodus 13:1-2). Jesus is considered the firstborn of many brothers (Romans 8:29); the firstborn of all creation (Colossians 1:15); and the firstborn from the dead (Colossians 1:18) and God gave him so that we might be his children, a new creation and have new resurrection life. If God would do this with his own Son, so that we could have everything why wouldn't we give back to him?
- + Jesus commands us to seek first the kingdom of God and trust that all our needs will be taken care of. (Matthew 6:33).
- + God no longer asks us to give our first fruits only—he gets it all. The first fruits principle informs HOW we give.

2. Does my giving demonstrate that I believe God is not only trustworthy to take care of me, but also generous in how he does it?

- + Do I give begrudgingly or with great joy?
- + Is giving a privilege or an obligation?

- + When I give do I give what I think I am required to give or beyond what I believe is required?
- + God did not give us what we deserve, but was merciful by NOT giving us what we deserved. Further, he was gracious by gifting us with much more than we deserve.

3. Does my giving demonstrate that I believe the gospel?

- + Do I believe that what I have is mine or that all I have belongs to God? How does that get reflected in my giving?
- + Since we have received unmerited / unearned favor from God, we should also give not based upon what we get but because of what we got.
- + The gospel tells us we are now fully secure in God's hands and the most loved and accepted people that we could ever be.
- + Does having money and things or holding on to my money make me feel more secure or significant?

4. How have I approached the idea of a tithe: Legalistically, Licentiously or Gospel Informed & Led?

- + Legalistically - the OT commanded to tithe 10% to the temple in order to meet the standard of righteousness, so I also tithe with the desire to measure up to the law.
- + Licentiously - tithing was an OT thing, and I am no longer required to do that in order to be made righteous, so I give whatever I feel like—it doesn't really matter.
- + Gospel - My righteousness does not come from my obedience to the law, but from Jesus' so I am free from trying to measure up to the law. In fact, when I trust in my ability to meet the standard of tithe as the thing that makes me righteous, I do not believe the gospel. At the same time, I am not my own, I was purchased by Jesus and his death for me, so I realize that all that I have I should give to him. In that case a tithe is really not enough. So, I don't just legalistically give a tithe, I ask the Holy Spirit how much I should give of his money and joyfully give what he tells me. And, I let the law be both a tutor, showing me where to begin, and as an indicator of my heart, showing me that I still am in need of Jesus to save me from my greed and selfishness because I still find it hard to give what was once required by the law and now is within my freedom to give in the gospel.

5. When giving money do I release it or try to control it? Do I trust the elders of the church to determine where it is best spent or do I want to make that call myself?

- + In the OT, the people brought the money to the temple (the NT Scriptures do not indicate that this ceased).
- + In the NT, the people also brought the money to the apostles or elders of the church entrusting it into their hands for where it would best be used.
- + One of the ways God grows our trust in him is by submitting to the leadership he places over us. One expression of that is through our giving.
- + Do I trust God with my money when I release it? Do I trust that he is in control of the leadership as well?

6. If I consider myself part of Resonate Church, and others followed my example of giving, where would we be as a church? As Missional Community? A future church plant?

- + A student when fully taught resembles their teacher. (Luke 6:40)
- + We are discipling people not primarily with what we say, but with what we do.
- + All of us speak with conviction around the things we are both convicted about and responsive in—the same is often true on the contrary—we are often silent about what we are either not convicted about or not faithful to do.