



When hard financial times come,

believers can take comfort in knowing that God is our true source of provision in life. His Word has a great deal to say about finances, both in good times and bad.

The disciplines of faithful work, saving money and the prudent use of resources have proven woefully absent among many of the hardest-hit businesses in today's current financial crisis. Yet Scripture has much to say about the path of the godly and their use of wealth.

God's ECONOMY

RE-EXAMINING FINANCIAL PRIORITIES IN A TIME OF CRISIS

By L. John Bueno



God's guidelines about money point directly to a critical truth ignored by many believers today: **TITHING.**



God's
ECONOMY

tithing

TITHING



Aubra George



Far from being a relic of the Old Testament,

tithing is a timeless principle of godly stewardship. Scripture clearly states that a tenth of all of our earnings is to be given back to God. Everything we have belongs to Him, but our act of obedience through tithing establishes our lives on a path of continued blessing and provision.

An emphasis on tithing is evident in the New Testament as well. Jesus spoke out against the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, but commended them for tithing (Matthew 23:23). Paul encouraged believers to give to God out of a grateful heart, implying that more than a tithe should be a believer's goal (2 Corinthians 9:7). New Testament believers regularly brought their tithes to their local house of worship.

A believer's responsibility at all times — good or bad — is to give a tenth of his or her personal earnings to the local church. Through tithing God provides for His work at home — and beyond.

MISSIONS GIVING



Missionaries John and Nancy LeCossec in France



Missionary Joil Marbut in Ecuador

AT THE FIRST AG General Council in 1914, the missions priority of the Fellowship was clearly defined. World evangelization was stated as "the chief concern of the church." In a resolution concerning tithes, the Council resolved that after the local ministry was supported, any surplus funds should be spent for "the spread of the gospel throughout the world."

God's
ECONOMY

THREE YEARS LATER, the Council declared, "We believe it is alike our privilege and our duty to assist in every practical effort to get the full Pentecostal message to the uttermost ends of the earth. Therefore be it resolved, that this Council heartily recommends that every local Pentecostal assembly take up a monthly offering for our Pentecostal missionaries who are faithfully laboring to preach the gospel 'to every creature.'" From the beginning, our Fellowship believed that every local church should maintain an ongoing involvement in worldwide missions, particularly in the support of the "missionaries who are faithfully laboring."



Ken Horn

Our early pioneers

placed a high priority on missions at home and abroad. Believers were encouraged to support their churches through tithing, and then to give beyond the tithe to reach the lost in other places. This emphasis on tithing and giving was repeated as missionaries established national fellowships in other lands. As a result, local churches are functioning healthily because congregations support their pastors and ministries. The gospel is extending beyond their nation and across the globe because of sacrificial giving.



Gaylon Wampler

Missionary Ricky Hendon in Ecuador

When believers miss the important ingredient of tithing, negative consequences result. God withholds a measure of blessing from those who take what belongs to Him. On the other hand, Christians who develop an attitude of generosity find multiple opportunities to give beyond their tithe to further the gospel. As that spirit of generosity overflows, God also responds with greater blessing.

Sometimes we can get sidetracked with things that are good in themselves, but are not necessarily God's highest priority. Bible schools, church buildings and relief ministries are very important, but no project should cause us to lose sight of our highest priority — people. The foremost beneficiary of missions support must be the person called of God to reach and develop new harvest fields. Missionaries are the key to evangelizing, establishing national churches, training workers, and ministering compassion to poor and suffering people to further God's work.

people

MORE THAN PROJECTS



Missionary Dan Klepel
in Thailand

In the New Testament, God gives us the supreme example of His interest in people over buildings. Jesus poured His life into His twelve disciples.

His emphasis on relationship demonstrated the importance of pouring our resources into people rather than projects. Even today, the heart of missions is the missionary who is willing to pour his or her life into others. Buildings or projects will come into being in God's timing, but ultimately, the work will not be accomplished without people.



ONCE THE PRINCIPLE OF GIVING generously is established, the next matter is what form that giving should take. In today's growing array of missions opportunities, believers need to discern how to lend their support in the most beneficial way.

Missionary Darrell Blatchley
in the Philippines



Missionary Bob Holloway
in Venezuela



Sacrificial giving

WHEN GOD LED my wife, Lois, and me to start a Christian school system for needy children in El Salvador, we started with nothing. I'm certain that if we had waited for buildings and playgrounds, the schools would never have become a reality.

We took 81 boys and girls off the streets of San Salvador and used old lumber to build benches and tables for makeshift classrooms in a local church. We invested what little money we had in providing competent teachers and meeting the children's needs. We discovered many of them were undernourished and couldn't learn properly until they had a decent meal. So, we fed them.

From the beginning, we followed God's priorities for spending His resources. The leadership of the Christian school system continues to follow that model, and God faithfully provides the infrastructure needed as the program grows.

Over the years, many thousands of people gave sacrificially to help Lois and me serve overseas and establish various churches and outreaches. Among those faithful givers was Roy Thorpe.

Roy was a plumbing contractor. Early on, he supported our ministry regularly. He was not wealthy, but he worked hard and gave sacrificially to missions. Sometimes he and his family gave up what they felt were luxuries so that needs in missions overseas could be met.

Some years back, Roy's community hit hard financial times. As companies all around him closed their doors, Roy's was the only plumbing business that survived the downturn. Roy had put God first, and God prospered him. Though Roy has since gone to be with the Lord, I think often of his faithfulness, God's blessing in his life, and the fruit that continues to come from his sacrifices.



Missionary Don Cartledge
in Chile

God's
ECONOMY

Sacrificial giving

God will abundantly bless every man and woman who gives to further His kingdom by supporting missionaries who have left home, family and friends to reach the lost. God's priorities are the people in His service, and His priorities do not shift according to the economy.

I implore you, on behalf of 2,700 missionaries and their families scattered around the world, to pray about giving sacrificially to missions — especially to support our missionaries. Now is not the time to become fearful about your finances, but rather faith-filled! The need is so great. Many of our missionaries are struggling to stay in the field of their calling, and they are doing everything possible to remain in ministry. But we must do our part.

In the apostle Paul's day, the Macedonian Christians faced a time of great struggle, yet they were known as extravagant givers. In his letter to the

Corinthians, Paul both commended the Macedonians for their giving and encouraged the Corinthians to follow their example and share in the reward. His words are fitting for the church even today:

“And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. **Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity.** For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints ... **see that you also excel in this grace of giving.**”

2 CORINTHIANS 8:1-4,7, NIV

During this time of economic crisis, may all of us follow the example Paul set before us. As we do our part, God will do His part. He will be faithful to us, because people are His priority.

E-mail your comments to tpe@ag.org.



L. JOHN BUENO
is executive director of
Assemblies of God World Missions.



Missionary Rich Farthing in Bolivia

Tim Schirman

Aubra George