

ASHLEY TERRADEZ

GOD WANTS YOU
RICH

The Scandalous Truth

"Warning! You're about to read a book
that will undoubtedly change your life."

from the Foreword by

Dr. Jesse Duplantis

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ENDORSEMENTS

I've known Ashley Terradez since 2006 when he brought his young daughter, Hannah, to one of my meetings in Walsall England. Hannah had an incurable disease, but Jesus miraculously healed her. Ashley and his wife, Carlie, enrolled and graduated from our United Kingdom Charis Bible College. They then moved to the United States and did the third-year school in Colorado. After that, they worked for me for ten years in many capacities and were a constant blessing in whatever they set their hand to.

I've seen firsthand, God's blessing on Ashley in the area of finances. Even while working for me, they were some of our biggest givers. They didn't limit the Lord to their salaries only but made wise investments and prospered with God as their source. It was Ashley's desire to be an even bigger giver that led him to leave the ministry, so he would not be taking from, but contributing to our ministry in an even greater way.

I'm privileged to serve on the Terradez Ministry board, and I've seen phenomenal growth in all areas including finances. They are light years ahead of where I was in the early years of my ministry, and their giving has been a big part of that.

All this background is to say that the truths Ashley shares in this book are not just theory with him. He has lived this, and I bear witness that it is working in his life and ministry in a powerful way. God is no respecter of persons. What has worked with Ashley and Carlie will work for you if you believe it and act on it as they have.

God Wants You Rich is absolutely true. Ashley will help break down many of the religious traditions that have kept this truth from you. It will give you practical steps to start experiencing God's

supernatural provision for yourself. Get ready for increase. God Wants You Rich!

Andrew Wommack

Author, President and Founder of Andrew Wommack
Ministries, Inc. and Charis Bible College

www.awmi.net

Ashley Terradez has one of the most robust, healthy, and faith-filled outlooks on prosperity I've ever encountered. His genuine desire to see the church of Jesus Christ truly prosper isn't some cliché, but rather a desire for believers to live abundant, rich, and full lives the way Jesus intended when He declared in John 10:10: "*...I came that they may have life, and have it in abundance [to the full, till it overflows].*"

Ashley's heart breaks watching the church live shortchanged lives and is dedicated to equipping believers with their God-given authority to prosper in God's favor. Let me warn you, if you don't want to prosper God's way, do NOT read this book!

Ben Dailey

Lead Pastor Calvary Church
Author of *Captured by Grace*

www.calvarychurch.cc

Ashley nailed it with this book!

The title alone is destined to make religion squirm. God wants you rich? How preposterous sounding to a carnal mind! However, if you bravely delve into its pages, you will soon discover what is truly scandalous—the devil's attempt to blame poverty on God.

This work is not theory to my friend Ashley; he has lived what he presents to you in the chapters of this book. Prepare for discovery, humor, and the keys to increase. As you begin your journey, have

ears to hear and a heart to perceive. As a result, insufficiency's hold might just become permanently damaged in every area of your life!

I highly recommend this book!

Joseph Z

Author, Prophet, Host of Prophecy LIVE

Founder of Zministries

JosephZ.Com

Ashley Terradez brings home the Gospel truth that God wants you to prosper in his new book *God Wants You Rich*.

He and Carlie have tremendous revelation in the area of sowing and reaping. I have seen their consistent growth in their personal lives and ministry as they practice the principles that Ashley preaches in this book.

Ashley is absolutely correct when he says it takes money to preach the Gospel. He and Carlie have attended Charis Christian Center for fourteen years. They are living examples of extreme generosity. Get ready to be blessed as you apply the scriptural truth that Ashley shares in this book!

Pastor Lawson Perdue

Charis Christian Center

Colorado Springs, CO

www.charischristiancenter.com

This book is a masterpiece! It will set you free from limiting beliefs while fashioning a mindset required to be prosperous. It is so potent because Ashley preaches what he's practiced. His heartfelt assignment for empowering believers is evident as he guides us to a new understanding of this reality: God wants you rich.

Tafara Butayi

Lead Pastor

Faith Hill Church

www.faithhillchurch.co.za

GOD WANTS YOU
RICH

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House* CA
Shippensburg, PA

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The Scandalous Truth

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CONTENTS

[Foreword](#)

[Introduction](#)

Chapter One [God Wants You to Prosper](#)

Chapter Two [A Wealthy Savior](#)

Chapter Three [Don't Fall For Fake News](#)

Chapter Four [Kingdom Economics](#)

Chapter Five [Riches by Grace Through Faith](#)

Chapter Six [Faith-Filled Diligence](#)

Chapter Seven [Faith-Filled Giving](#)

[Conclusion](#)

[About the Author](#)

FOREWORD

WARNING: You're about to read a book that will undoubtedly change your life. In *God Wants You Rich*, by Ashley Terradez, you will be challenged and inspired to accept God's great desire for you. And by the end, you'll never accept living in lack ever again.

I really liked this book, and particularly loved the title—not because it's controversial but because it's the absolute truth. God really *does* want you rich! I found myself nodding in agreement with Ashley all the way through because he is on point and backs everything up with Scripture. And I can tell you firsthand that it's true because I experience in my own life the very goodness, favor, and blessing of God that he talks about.

Friend, we can have what God promised to us in His Word. All of it is available to us because we are His kids. We are in the family! That's why I especially love when Ashley talks about "Good Fathers Give Good Gifts." You see, most people see God as somebody who they're afraid of—either because of their own bad experiences with their own fathers or because they've been taught hard and incorrect doctrine about God (that He's mad at them or a hard taskmaster) and, therefore, they grow to think God is unlovable. However, nothing could be further from the truth! God *is* love. He is a good Father, and we are His family!

Weaved throughout this book, you'll discover the "why"—God's purpose for your wealth—and that it's more than just about you. This is a great read for anyone who needs help in their finances. We live in an economic world and money is the tool used to live in this world. When we have God's wisdom on how to handle it and what to do with it, we will live correctly.

Ashley is masterful at breaking this down where anyone can understand. I challenge you to read this and weigh the evidence for yourself based on the uncompromising Word of God. I know you will be blessed by it.

Dr. Jesse Duplantis
Evangelist, Author, TV Host;
President and Founder of Jesse Duplantis Ministries

INTRODUCTION

I'M GOING TO SAY SOMETHING that always gets me into trouble, but it is the scandalous truth. Are you ready?

God wants you rich.

These four words are often the most controversial, the most contentious, the most debated among Christian circles. Riches are viewed as something pursued to fulfill a personal desire for comfort and pleasure. Wealth is perceived to be held only by selfish or spoiled individuals. People, especially Christians, say they don't want to be greedy, so they shun the idea of riches being a good thing.

Have you heard this before?

However, Scripture tells us God wants us to be rich. He wants us blessed, both spiritually and financially. I would go so far as to say that God actually *needs* us to be rich! I understand, that's a hard idea to hear and believe, but one of the reasons we struggle to accept it is because we misunderstand the purpose of that wealth. We'll always have hesitation with this idea when we misunderstand the godly purpose behind it.

I heard this story once about a woman who purchased an iPad for her father. A few months later, during a visit, she asked him how he'd been enjoying his present. "Oh, I love it," he said. "I use it all the time!" Then he took her into the kitchen, grabbed a bunch of carrots, and started slicing them on the top of the tablet. He thought it was a cutting board!

When we don't understand the purpose of something, we miss its benefit. We misuse it, even abuse it, all due to our

misunderstanding. And that's where so many of us are with the idea of riches. God's plan to financially prosper us has become misunderstood, therefore, misused, and even abused. As we witness such abuses, we even more intensely reject the idea that God wants us rich.

However, being rich in the way God intended goes far beyond the superficial advantages of creature comforts. It is not at all a matter of selfish ambition. In fact, God's purpose for financial increase is the complete opposite!

Those of us who adhere to the idea God wants to bless His people financially are often accused of taking verses out of context or misrepresenting their meaning. Yet, we also need to be sure we aren't misrepresenting Scripture to teach people that God does *not* want to provide for their financial needs.

Listen, misrepresenting the Word of God is the last thing I ever want to do! We need to rightly divide the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15), whether it tickles our particular doctrinal fancies or not. The truth may seem scandalous, but it doesn't make it any less true.

If we want to fully enjoy the benefits of God's plan for our lives, we need to understand His design behind financial prosperity. We need to do a little bit of Bible study, some research, and really dig in and discover what the Word of God tells us about His plans for our finances. It's time to debunk the myths, answer the questions, and believe that God—a good, good Father—wants us rich.

CHAPTER ONE

GOD WANTS YOU TO PROSPER

WHAT IS GOD'S WILL for your life concerning finances? Does God want you rich, or does He want you to be poor? What does the Word of God teach us about His blessing on the lives of believers?

The blessing of the LORD makes one rich, and He adds no sorrow with it.

Proverbs 10:22

When reading scriptures that mention riches, many Christians say, "Oh, this is talking about spiritual wealth." Yet, the Hebrew word used here for "rich" is referring to possessions. Yes, of course, God wants spiritual wealth for us, too, but in this verse, He's speaking specifically about material wealth.

Believers often misinterpret this verse, among many others, because they believe there is holiness in poverty, that righteousness somehow requires being destitute. They feel that wealth equates to greed, so it can't be a blessing from God.

So, let's find out the truth of the matter. In scriptures which refer to riches or wealth, are they describing spiritual abundance or physical assets? Context is very important when studying the Word of God. It's also a good idea to compare where the same or similar words are used throughout the Scriptures. In doing so, we can connect the Scriptures to discover the true meaning behind them.

Where else in the Bible does God use the term "rich"? We'll review verses in the Old and New Testaments to ensure we fully

comprehend the context. It's important we understand what the Word of God is truly saying. If we don't know that God does want us rich, we won't be able to pray for it, believe it, and receive it. We need to know the truth. Otherwise, we might find ourselves chopping carrots on something much more valuable than a cutting board!

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.

2 Corinthians 8:9

When He was crucified, Jesus became poor so that we might be rich! As in Proverbs 10:22, this word for "rich" is not referring to spiritual riches. It means literal, financial wealth.

In the Old Testament, we find the same Hebrew word for "rich" as before.

Here is the man who did not make God his strength, but trusted in the abundance of his riches...

Psalms 52:7

Here, once again, Scripture refers to possessions. In this instance, the man chose to trust his wealth, his money, his finances, instead of God. Although this context refers to riches in a negative sense, it's the same as in Proverbs 10:22 and 2 Corinthians 8:9. These all describe physical, financial riches.

Do not be afraid when one becomes rich, when the glory of his house is increased; for when he dies he shall carry nothing away; his glory shall not descend after him.

Psalms 49:16-17

Again, it is the exact same word for “riches” used here that was used in Proverbs 10:22. This word is without doubt indicating a physical, not spiritual, wealth.

Now, don’t misunderstand me. God absolutely desires our spiritual wealth. No question! However, the context of each of these scriptures is not referencing that spiritual form of wealth, and we want to make sure we’re correctly understanding God’s meaning.

If we go back to 2 Corinthians again, we find the same thing—God referring to material riches. In fact, chapters eight and nine in 2 Corinthians deal specifically with money, finances, offerings, and stewardship. To view 2 Corinthians 8:9 as referencing spiritual richness would require us to take the verse completely out of context.

When these verses are speaking of riches, it is not in reference to having a family, spouse, children, enriching relationships, a fulfilling calling, strong faith, or joy, even though those are all huge blessings and far more important than money. In these instances, however, the Scripture is referring to tangible things: your finances, your possessions, the substance of your home, and the things you possess.

Good Fathers Give Good Gifts

Logically, the idea God wants to bless you with material possessions makes sense. It’s really not a scandalous idea at all. He’s the best Father. And wonderful fathers want their kids to be well cared for. So, wouldn’t it make sense that a Father who owns cattle on a thousand hills, and has streets made of gold, would want His children financially blessed?

If you’re a parent, you understand this completely. Whether your children are young or old, you want them to succeed, to do well, to be well, and to have what they need. It would break your heart to see

them begging for bread or going without. In fact, most of you truly enjoy buying gifts for your children on birthdays or holidays. Sometimes we buy too much and even spoil them!

So, what makes us think God is any different? Why do we think our Father God wouldn't show us more love and lavish more gifts upon us than we would our own children?

God is our provider, and He displays that aspect of His character throughout Scripture.

Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.

3 John 2

The word "prosper" here is *euodoó*. It means to prosper on your journey, and to succeed in business affairs.

This applies to you no matter where you are in the world. God wants you rich. Regardless of your circumstances, location, or country, His blessings are there for you. Whether in North America, where you're already richer than 90% of the world, or in developing countries in Asia and Africa, God has given His children His blessing.

I've seen all over the world how believing in God's promises for financial blessing brings increase. His Word works, no matter who you are, where you live, or what side of the train tracks you grew up on. God's will for you is to bless you financially and to have all your needs met.

Abundance Is for You

Many people, due to their circumstances, exclude themselves from the promises of God. They believe where they were born or grew up

determines God's plans for their financial future. They see themselves at a disadvantage compared to others.

God, however, is no respecter of persons. It doesn't matter if you're young or old, or live in a first- or third-world country. It doesn't matter what language you speak, or what family you were born into. Anyone who takes the Word of God, mixes it with faith, and applies it to their life will see the blessings of God.

The only qualification required is faith.

A friend of mine from Zimbabwe grew up poor. Not American poor. African poor. He lived in a two-room shack of cinder block walls where he slept every night under the kitchen table. The poverty he experienced meant living with next to nothing. For him, there was no such thing as abundance.

One day, though, he saw a neighborhood kid riding a bicycle, and he couldn't stop thinking about how amazing it would be to have a bicycle of his own. He could ride it anywhere he wanted to go. He would have freedom with that bicycle and hours upon hours of simple joy. He told himself, "One day, when I'm a rich man, I'm going to own a bicycle."

Around this time, he started reading about God's promises of abundance. But even there, Lord? Even in the midst of abject poverty in Africa?

Instead of doubting or making excuses due to the economy in his country, my friend decided to believe God's promises. He got a revelation from the Holy Spirit concerning God's will for his blessed financial future. Instead of that bicycle being a dream, he began expecting God to provide. He set his faith on the promise of abundance and his whole life changed.

Today, although he was raised in one of the poorest nations in Africa, my friend is rich. He lives in a beautiful house, drives nice

cars, and if he wants a bicycle, he has the funds to purchase one. He started a church network there in Africa and, through his abundance, has been able to help so many others. He is a big giver to our ministry!

The promises of abundance from God work for everyone, anywhere. Even in the poorest areas. Even in the humblest of circumstances, God's Word is true.

God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.

2 Corinthians 9:8

There's no lack in this verse. Having sufficiency in all things means you have your needs met, but it doesn't stop there. You will have an *abundance* for every good work. You will not only have enough, but you will also have *more* than enough. That is God's will for you financially.

Wherever you are in the world, whatever your needs, they will differ depending on your life and your location. However, the principle stands. Whatever you need, you'll have it. Plus, more.

Debunking the Prosperity Gospel

If you don't believe God's promises, then you can't understand the purpose behind them. And misunderstanding the purpose is how we cancel the intended benefit. It's how promised blessings become abused and used inappropriately.

Earlier, I mentioned the man who was given an iPad and used it for a chopping board. That's what happens to our abundance, too. It's misunderstood and ends up being abused.

If we don't understand why God wants us rich, we end up abusing it, like tossing a highly sophisticated electronic device into the dishwasher. Or, we'll simply refuse to have anything to do with it. That's where many Christians live today—avoidance. They sneer and call it the “prosperity gospel,” then declare, “I want nothing to do with that.”

Here is another scandalous truth: the prosperity gospel is a lie. There is no such thing as the prosperity gospel. **There is only one Gospel.** And part of that Gospel is that Jesus paid the price for you to have prosperity.

Recently, while in Africa on a preaching trip, I was met with protestors who were opposing my visit by saying, “Don't bring this American prosperity gospel preacher into your church!” First of all, my accent should be a strong indicator I wasn't born in America. Secondly, I'm not a prosperity gospel teacher.

I teach Jesus. I teach the Gospel. And the Gospel just happens to include your provision.

You don't have to partake. No one is forcing you to believe God for financial increase. If you want nothing to do with the provisions God has planned for you, then you'll simply not receive them. He isn't going to force you to take His blessings.

We either believe the Word, or we don't believe the Word. If we're going to throw out prosperity, provision, blessings, and God's willingness to care for His children, then we're discrediting the nature of God. If we choose to believe prosperity isn't intended for us, then shouldn't we believe the same about healing, forgiveness, and deliverance?

It's either all true, or it's all a lie. We need to decide.

Provision Is Part of the Atonement

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.

2 Corinthians 8:9

God's provision for us is part of the atonement. Jesus paid for it. He was rich, but He became poor.

Think of the richness of Jesus. In Heaven, streets are made of gold. The foundations of the walls are made of precious gemstones. The gates are made of pearls. In Heaven, there is no lack. Everything that is needed is provided.

Jesus left all of that and became poor for our sake. He experienced poverty so that through His lack we would be made rich.

If you're born again, you are already rich. Even if you're poor, you're rich. It's the same spiritual truth we find in 2 Corinthians 5:21: *"He made him who knew no sin to be sin for us."* He did this so we could be made righteous. That means, even if you're sinning right now, if you're born again, you are righteous.

It's like my wife so eloquently says, "Your physical condition does not determine your spiritual position." And your spiritual position in Christ is that you are righteous, healed, and rich.

The Great Exchange

Jesus came to earth and did all the work for us. Now we get to pick up the spoils of His war against sin, sickness, poverty, and death. We now have access to the goodness of God. He took our sin, our sickness, and our poverty through His sacrifice on the cross.

Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness —by whose stripes you were healed.

1 Peter 2:24

He did this so that we could take on His health and healing. At thirty-three years old, Jesus was in the prime of His life. His body was perfect. It was free of sickness, brokenness, and age. Then He willingly submitted to His death on the cross. He suffered agonizing pain, brokenness, and suffering.

He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.

Isaiah 53:3-5

In the original Hebrew text, the word “peace” is *shalom*. You’ve probably heard this before, like in the greetings between two Jewish people. This word means more than simply peace, or rest, or calmness. It means health, happiness, wholeness, peace, safety, favor, friendship, and prosperity.

In the New Testament, the equivalent of that word is *sozo*, which means to be healed, to be whole, to be complete, and to be prospered.

In other words, Jesus literally paid for our prosperity at the same time He paid for our iniquities, sin, and sickness. In order for us to experience the wholeness Jesus paid for on the cross, prosperity cannot be separated from it.

Jesus paid for it all. Why wouldn't we want to receive it? Would you do this with any other gift? Would you leave it unwrapped? Unopened? Disrespected and wasted? If Jesus paid for it—and He did—then we need to receive it.

Accept the scandalous truth that Jesus wants you rich. In Psalm 103, Scripture talks about how God forgives our sins, heals our diseases, and satisfies our mouths with good things. He provides everything we need.

That's the great exchange. He was made sin so that we could take on His righteousness. He bore our sickness and disease so we could be made well. He became poor so that we could be rich.

If you haven't seen that, yet, hold on. Once you start believing it, you're going to start seeing it manifest in your life.

God the Provider

God loves His children, and He provides for His children. In fact, one of the seven names of God is Jehovah Jireh, which means, "God, the provider."

And Abraham called the name of that place, The-Lord-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, "In the Mount of the LORD it shall be provided."

Genesis 22:14

This verse comes from a foundational story in the Old Testament. God had given Abraham and Sarah a son named Isaac. He is often referred to as the child of promise. The Lord had renamed Abram, and his new name of Abraham meant "father of many nations." Isaac was the hope upon which this promise of God was based. Those many nations, promised to Abraham by his heavenly Father, were to come through Isaac and his descendants.

However, God asked Abraham to offer Isaac as a sacrifice to Him. This wasn't a symbolic sacrifice, as when we dedicate our babies to the Lord as infants. No, God required Abraham to physically lay his only son on an altar, *kill* him, and offer him up to the Lord as a burnt offering. His only son.

Abraham needed provision. He was about to stab his precious, long-awaited, yearned-for child, offering his life to the Lord. It must have been an agonizing decision for him, yet Abraham had a secure relationship with God and trusted Him. In fact, when Isaac asked his father, "*Where is the lamb for a burnt offering?*" Abraham replied, "*My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering*" (Genesis 22:7-8).

And what happened? After Abraham had placed Isaac upon the alter, surrounding him with the wood to burn, and raised up the knife to deliver the killing blow, God stopped him! Abraham looked up and saw a ram, caught in a bush. God miraculously provided for him and spared the life of his child. God revealed Himself to Abraham as his provider.

Yes, God honored Abraham's faith and spared Isaac's life. However, when the sacrifice of Jesus was needed, He followed through with His plan to save mankind. If He didn't hesitate to sacrifice Jesus for us—a life of such immeasurable value we could never quantify—how can we think that God would withhold His best in any other area? It's illogical to think that our loving Father would want us to be poor.

He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

Romans 8:32

Our heavenly Father is a good father. He takes care of us. He provides for us. God always pays His child support! Why? Because He loves us. He is honorable, He is trustworthy, He is good. That's why He wants to make you rich.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

John 3:16

This is probably the most famous verse in the Bible, used most often to teach about the salvation Jesus provided us. Yet, here it highlights God as a giver. He loved us so much that He *gave*—and not just something valuable, but His *most scandalously valuable* possession: Jesus. Abraham offering Isaac to the Lord as a sacrifice was foreshadowing the time when God would *not* withhold the Promised Child. Jesus was sacrificed as an offering to atone for the sin of the world.

God is your provider, and He loves providing for you.

Trust in God

Often in our lives, my wife, Carlie, and I have needed to place our faith in God as our provider. One instance happened when we began attending Bible college.

To make it happen, I had to give up my job, and we had to move our family across the country to a town we'd never even visited. Once we started Bible college, we both had school tuition, as well as tuition for our three kids who were still small. With both of us going to school, I knew I wouldn't be able to work a full-time job. So, we had to rest in Philippians 4:19: *"And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."*

If you don't see God as your provider, it's going to be hard to step out in faith when God calls you to do things. When He tells you to "leave" something or "go" somewhere, you're going to struggle to be obedient if you do not understand that God *will* supply your needs.

That doesn't mean you sit in your prayer closet, pray, and then do nothing. In faith, you will have to put your hands to something. But when you do, He will bless the work of your hands.

Provision Already Made

This was exactly where we were when Carlie and I started Bible college. We had tuition to pay for both us and our kids, and no one to rely on but God. Even our church leadership warned us not to do it, telling us we'd run out of money. But we had a word from God to go. So, in faith, we went.

After two months of starting Bible college, we'd reached our financial limit. We were at the end of our overdraft protection, no more extensions, no more credit, and no money. We knew something wasn't right. I remember telling God, "We are following Your will, but something is wrong here."

Here's where the grace of God comes in. I mistakenly thought that if I was going to school to be a full-time minister, the material things would just come. I was leaning on 1 Corinthians 9:11: "*If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you?*" I thought money would just fall on us, good measure, pressed down, and overflowing. I had it in my head people would just hand over cash; that I'd be walking down the street, and they'd throw checks at me. It was going to be awesome! So, I didn't work. I didn't put my hands to anything, even though I could have.

So, there we were. Two months into Bible college, me not working, rent due, and bills piling up. No more credit. Nothing. And

even though my thinking was incorrect, God's grace still showed up.

I knew God was a good provider, but there was a piece missing. So, Carlie and I prayed. We told him, "Lord, we've got two days to go. We know You're not usually early, but if You could be on time, that would be really great."

Around this time, Carlie was at home one day praying about our situation. She put on some worship music and started vacuuming the house. While she was talking to God and running the vacuum, she heard the Lord say, "I've already provided for you. It's in your house, and it's in your hand."

She got so excited, she called me and said, "The Lord is going to provide!"

I told her, "Amen. Yes, He is." But our circumstances still hadn't changed.

Then, God moved.

While Carlie was vacuuming—running that machine around more vigorously now because she knew God would provide and she didn't need to fear—she hit the baseboard near the front door and an envelope slid out.

In England, the letter box is in the door. You don't remove your mail from a mailbox. The postman slides it straight into your house through that mail slot. While Carlie was vacuuming, she hit the baseboard, and the force dislodged an envelope that had gotten stuck inside the wall cavity. Inside the envelope was a check, dated two months earlier, that covered all our bills with enough left over to cover a couple months of living expenses!

Prior to this, we had cashed in an insurance policy to pay for our tuition for the year. It had been sent but had gotten lost under the baseboard. God had already provided, but we couldn't see it, even

though it had been inside our home the entire time. We'd walked by our provision every day and never even knew it was there.

The Lord will provide for you. Even when you're not perfect. Even when you aren't getting it all right. If your heart is right and you're seeking Him, you can stand on the Word, and God will provide.

God Knows Your Needs

Your heavenly Father loves you. He wants you to look to Him as your source for all things, including your financial health.

"Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."

Matthew 6:31-33

God knows you need a place to live, clothes to wear, and food to eat. He understands that you will need financial help to fulfill His calling on your life, like school tuition or funding for missions. Jesus is saying here that if you place God first, make Him your priority, all these things will be given to you!

However, it doesn't come by doing nothing. That's the part I had misunderstood. Faith in God's Word results in outward action. God is calling you to put your hand to something. To work. Then He will bless that effort. He is Jehovah Jireh, and He will provide.

The only way you can mess it up is by wrong thinking, like I did. I sat there and did nothing. I put my hands to nothing. If I had, we wouldn't have gotten into such a dire financial situation. God will

provide, but you must be working so He can bless the work of your hands.

You do your part and, even though you don't see the provision yet, you can trust it is there. God is faithful. Your provision is already in your hand. You just might need to vacuum to find it!

He Is Able

One thing I really love about God is how He can take the mistakes we have made and completely redeem them. That is really comforting when you know you've made a foolish financial decision!

In 2 Chronicles, we read the story of King Amaziah of Judah. At this time, the two tribes of Judah were separated from the ten tribes of Israel. The ten tribes had fallen deeply into idolatry, whereas Judah continued to worship God. Judah was gearing up for war against Edom, so King Amaziah began to prepare.

He organized his own army of three hundred thousand men, but then he also hired one hundred thousand soldiers from Israel at the price of one hundred talents of silver. In today's currency, that would be approximately *two million dollars*.

But a man of God came to him, saying, "Oh king, do not let the army of Israel go with you, for the Lord is not with Israel—not with any of the children of Ephraim. But if you go, be gone! Be strong in battle! Even so, God shall make you fall before the enemy; for God has power to help and to overthrow."

2 Chronicles 25:7-8

Apparently, Amaziah felt that in the natural, his army of three hundred thousand men wasn't enough to win the coming war. So, he spent *millions* of dollars to hire troops from Israel to help. But this

prophet was telling him not to use those troops because, since God was not in support of Israel and their idolatry, they would cause him to fail.

But this posed quite the dilemma to King Amaziah. If this was true, he had just wasted two million dollars! Bye-bye, millions. Right down the proverbial toilet.

*Then Amaziah said to the man of God, "But what shall we do about the hundred talents which I have given to the troops of Israel?" And the man of God answered, "The Lord is able to give you **much more** than this."*

2 Chronicles 25:9 (emphasis added)

If you can get this, it will change your life. Even when we make foolish decisions, God is bigger than our mistakes!

When I was in Bible school in England, I looked into different ways of making extra money, and I decided to invest in the foreign currency exchange (Forex). I was buying and selling, and made and lost money at different points throughout the years.

One day, I woke up in the morning and was horrified to see that the market had completely tanked overnight! I put my head in my hands and groaned.

My son asked me, "Dad is that good or bad?"

I said, "Son, tell Mum to pray!" I lost so much money. It wasn't just a small loss—it was devastating! I decided to stop trading because it was just too risky.

However, thankfully, God works behind the scenes on our behalf, even when we can't see it. When I closed out the accounts, due to the fluctuations in the market over those two years, and converting to a new currency, I ended up coming out with a small increase! I didn't

lose a penny, and I believe that was God doing a supernatural thing to cover my mistake.

Through the years, I've made different investments, and I have investment accounts. One specific mutual fund I had was set up to receive automatic deposits on a regular basis. Well, during the first stages of the coronavirus pandemic, the stock market had experienced some serious losses. So, Carlie and I pulled up our accounts to see how badly our investment in this particular mutual fund had tanked.

Instead, we found something totally unexpected.

What we hadn't realized is that this investment had a two-step process. Step one was transferring the funds from our bank to the investment services company. However, there was a second step we weren't aware of. This was where it required us to click another button to take the money from the investment service account and actually purchase shares in the mutual fund.

All the money we had been having automatically transferred was there in the account, but it had never been used to purchase the shares. So, we found ourselves in a perfect position to take the money that had accrued over time and invest it all, right when the market was almost at its lowest!

By the time the market began to recover, we had *doubled* our investment! Instead of losing money, as we had expected, we doubled our money instead.

Since my foray into Forex, our family and ministry have increased beyond our wildest imaginations, and this particular situation during the coronavirus market crash was one where God handled it to restore what had been lost in the past. He used what in the natural world was a horrible circumstance to bring us incredible increase.

So, be encouraged: even when we make mistakes, God is able to give us *much more than this!*

Just to be clear, risk is an inherent part of doing business. Just because you lose money, it doesn't mean that God wasn't with you. The good news is that God can cover and recover it!

More Than Enough

God doesn't provide for us in a way that is just barely enough. He always supplies more than enough, in excess. He doesn't want us to barely get by; He wants us to have an abundance!

Consider what Jesus did for the 5,000—probably big, strong, hungry men, *plus* women and children. There were likely *at least* 10,000 people in attendance, including women and children. Yet, Jesus took what was available—five loaves and two fish—and multiplied it until everyone had eaten until they were full, and there were twelve baskets of food left over. There was *more* than enough.

That's what God always does. Jesus' sacrifice was more than enough. He paid for the sins of the whole world. When He gave His life, He *oversupplied*. There's never a shortage with Jesus.

A pastor friend of mine once told me, "Whenever you host an event, especially if you invite the lost, never run out of food. God's very nature is about having an abundance, so put out more than enough food." Jesus is never going to lay out a spread, invite others, and then run out of food. What He provides is always overflowing!

Not everyone is going to agree with this view. Even my pastor friend received flak from his elders when there was food left over after their events. However, he told them, "I'd much rather have too much because it's representative of who God is."

That's God's very nature—abundance. He's not the god of poverty or the god of lack. He is El Shaddai—the many-breasted one

—the God of more than enough!

CHAPTER TWO

A WEALTHY SAVIOR

I'M ABOUT TO SPEAK A TRUTH that may offend. It could be considered a bit scandalous. In all honesty, it offended me, too, when I first heard it. I thought, *That can't be right*. But everything I'm about to say is based on Scripture. So, hold on. We're about to do some myth busting.

Jesus Christ was rich.

If that strikes you as an odd thought, you aren't alone. I've been there. I learned things from religious circles, from the tradition of men, which made the Word of God ineffective in my life. It blinded me to the truth of Scripture. To show you what I'm talking about, let's start in 2 Corinthians.

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.

2 Corinthians 8:9

In the first part of the verse, the Apostle Paul is talking about finances. This is a financial verse, so we don't want to take it out of context. The word "rich" here is talking about substance, aka money.

Earlier, in 1 Corinthians, the Apostle Paul instructs us to be like Christ.

Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.

1 Corinthians 11:1

You want to be like Jesus, but here's the problem: your picture of Jesus is probably someone who is poor, homeless, wearing shabby clothes, and trying to find somewhere to sleep for the night. It will be difficult for you to see yourself like Jesus, while accepting that part of that includes being financially prosperous, if that is the picture you have of Him.

In general, Christians tend to present poverty as being holy, but it's not. Prosperity is a blessing from God. It's His will for your life.

In order to believe that, we need to reconcile our struggle between the idea of Jesus being poor, and our desire to be like Jesus, with God's will for us to prosper. We need to make sense of it, right? To do so, we need to look at the life of Christ and debunk a few misconceptions.

Rich on Earth

You might do the same thing I used to do. I would read 2 Corinthians 8:9 and assume the *"though He was rich"* meant Jesus had wealth when He was in Heaven but became poor when He was born as a human. He did have wealth in Heaven. And He does now, too. However, that isn't what this scripture is saying. The Apostle Paul was referring to financial riches here on earth. Jesus had wealth in the physical, earthly sense. This verse is talking about Jesus having wealth and laying it aside for us.

He did this with everything He had. He poured Himself out as an offering. He had health, peace, and wealth. Yet, for our sakes, *"He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich."* But He didn't do that during His first thirty-three years of life on earth. He didn't become poor until the sacrifice He made for us on the cross.

Jesus was in the lineage of Abraham. He had those covenant rights to be rich on earth. Let's look at a few aspects of His life that have been misunderstood and illustrate His earthly wealth.

His Birth

In the Scriptures, we hear the amazing story of Jesus' birth and how Mary and Joseph could find no room in an inn. Because they didn't have a place to stay the night, Jesus was born in a stable. Christians often conclude this occurred due to their lack of funds, that Joseph simply couldn't afford a room.

However, this had nothing to do with money. During this time, Caesar had commanded a mandatory census, which drew people back to their hometowns, like Bethlehem. With so many out-of-town people needing a place to sleep, all at once, the rooms were all taken. Have you ever tried to book a hotel in a town hosting a huge event? Well, that's how Jesus ended up being born in a stable, which was a powerful symbol from God of Jesus' eventual death.

Jesus, the Lamb of God, would be born where sacrificial lambs are born. Not in a hotel room, but among the animals.

It had nothing to do with money and everything to do with symbolism.

His Visitors

And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Matthew 2:11

After His birth, while He was likely not much older than a toddler, Jesus was visited by wise men who traveled from afar to see him. When they arrived, they presented three kinds of gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

These are valuable gifts. In fact, the amount of wealth handed to Jesus at that moment has been studied and estimated. In today's currency, those gifts added up to millions. Maybe even tens of millions.

Many believe Joseph and Mary used those gifts as a way to finance their move to Egypt and escape Herod. Joseph wasn't able to work at the time while they journeyed, and Jesus was still very young. They needed funds to live on.

So, why was Jesus given such wealth as a toddler? Because God supplies for His kids. Remember, He pays His child support! Would God have given Joseph and Mary His cherished Son to raise without providing for them? Of course not! Jesus' family was *not* poor. That money would have provided for them for many, many years.

His Ministry

Let's look at what happened after Mary of Bethany anointed Jesus' feet with a very expensive jar of fragrant oil:

But one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, who would betray Him, said, "Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it.

John 12:4-6

During Jesus' earthly ministry, Judas worked as His treasurer, albeit a corrupt one. A ministry without funds does not need a treasurer!

Consider that verse six says that Judas, *“used to take what was put in it.”* Judas had been taking money out of the ministry’s treasury, undetected. To do this—to habitually embezzle without anyone noticing the funds are gone or depleted—there must have been a substantial amount collected. There would need to be a hearty sum to cover that kind of fraud!

So, not only was Jesus not personally poor, due to the gifts given to him as a toddler, supplemented by working as a craftsman—you can’t convince me that the Savior’s carpentry business wasn’t blessed—His ministry had the funds to have regular theft go unnoticed.

His Travel

Jesus was always on the move, which meant funds were needed. You can’t travel without money. You’d need the financial means to travel like Jesus traveled.

Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. And He said to them, “Take nothing for the journey, neither staffs nor bag nor bread nor money; and do not have two tunics apiece.”

Luke 9:1-3

After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go...”Carry neither money bag, knapsack, nor sandals; and greet no one along the road.”

Luke 10:1, 4

Some teachers will point out these verses and say, “Look! Right here, Jesus told His disciples to leave their money at home! They didn’t need money to do what Jesus called them to do, or to minister the Gospel.”

Let’s use some critical thinking skills here: If Jesus and His disciples were penniless, why would He have felt it necessary to tell them to leave their money bags, food, and extra clothing at home? He had to give them that specific instruction because *they had those provisions!* He wouldn’t have had to tell them to do so if they didn’t already have the money, extra food, or extra clothing to leave behind.

The reason Jesus gave His disciples this specific command was so they would learn to trust God to take care of them. It wasn’t because they didn’t *have* the resources. His disciples were successful businessmen, fishermen, and tax collectors who were notorious for being wealthy. What does that tell us? The people who followed Jesus had money.

His command to go on their missionary journeys without the provision they had earned was so they would learn how God the Father takes care of His children. Jesus wanted His disciples to learn to trust in God rather than in their money.

Many ministry organizations have done the same thing to teach their volunteers and employees how to trust God. One specific testimony I heard was from a young person years ago. As an intern with a mission organization, he was given just this challenge.

His group of six were taken out, dropped off in a random location with no money, no transportation, and no food. They were told, “Okay, your destination is at this address,” pointing to the location on a map. “We will see you there!”

This group of young people began by walking down the road. Before evening on that same day, a man stopped his vehicle to ask them why they were walking down the road.

They replied, "We are out here to share the love of Jesus with people!" It turned out that this man was a Christian, an elder in his church. He took this group of kids to his home, fed them, and offered them a place to stay for the night.

The next day, they set out again. During this week-long "mission trip," this group of young people never went hungry and always had a warm place to stay. They learned the truth that when we trust in the Lord, He will provide!

And He said to them, "When I sent you without money bag, knapsack, and sandals, did you lack anything?" So they said, "Nothing." Then He said to them, "But now, he who has a money bag, let him take it, and likewise a knapsack..."

Luke 22:35

When the disciples were sent on their journey, they never went without. God provided for them, and they learned the lesson Jesus had set out to teach them. Once they learned what He had taught, He then told them to go ahead and take their money, and their extra supplies. Once they knew that God was their provider, rather than their possessions, they were free to continue to move forward in faith.

So, Jesus had a treasury for His ministry, and those resources were necessary to help provide for Himself and His disciples as they traveled. These verses where He instructed them to go traveling without those resources was simply to teach them to trust God. It was not an indication that they were poor.

His Clothes

Jesus did not wear raggedly clothing, barely held together by clothes pins and prayer. Let's read about what happened to His clothing when He was crucified:

Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments and made four parts, to each soldier a part, and also the tunic. Now the tunic was without seam, woven from the top in one piece. They said therefore among themselves, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be," that the Scripture might be fulfilled which says: "They divided My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots." Therefore the soldiers did these things.

John 19:23-24

Jesus' clothes were so nice that the soldiers who crucified Him split the items among them, and then cast lots to see who could keep the tunic. It was such high quality, they wanted to toss the dice to see who would receive it, which is not something you do with rags.

Jesus' tunic was a seamless garment, woven in one piece, top to bottom. This would have been the equivalent of a designer suit in our culture.

His clothes spoke of wealth, not poverty.

His Transportation

Jesus chose to ride into Jerusalem on a colt that had never been ridden before. He instructed His disciples where to find it and to bring it to Him (Matthew 21:1-9). This wasn't an old, used donkey. It was a brand-new baby, a valuable mode of transportation.

In today's culture, you might think of it like this: Jesus rode into town in a brand-new car, not a used one!

His Offerings

Not only did Jesus have wealth, but those around Him also gave Him gifts. For example, Mary broke an alabaster jar of oil, a year's salary, to anoint Him.

And certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities—Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who provided for Him from their substance.

Luke 8:2-3

So, there was also a group of women who traveled with Him, ministered to Him, and gave to Him out of their own wealth and provision. God provided these women to help Him during His ministry. As a single man, they must have been a huge blessing to Him (Mark 15:41).

His House

This one is going to surprise a lot of you, but there's more Scripture to support the idea Jesus had a house than He didn't. He was a carpenter. It makes sense that He'd have built a place to live.

However, let's look in Luke where we see the biggest argument against the idea Jesus had a house of His own:

And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."

Luke 9:58

This is the scripture most use to say Jesus never even had a home. To understand what's going on here, though, we need to look at the previous verses.

Starting in verse 56, we learn that Jesus was traveling to another village. In the middle of this journey, He was approached by a man who said, *“Lord, I will follow You wherever You go.”*

As a way to test his sincerity, in verse 58, Jesus offered a little resistance. He was telling this man that His ministry was a traveling ministry. He was saying that there isn't always sleeping accommodations on the journey. Rest may happen in a field or a temporary place. He was illustrating to this man the reality of His life. Would the man still follow Him then?

It didn't mean Jesus didn't have a home. It meant Jesus was away from home while ministering.

The book of Mark also supports the idea that Jesus owned a home. Jesus invited Levi, aka Matthew, to follow Him. So, he did. In the next verse, we read about the supper that followed. But whose house was it held in?

As He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, “Follow Me.” So he arose and followed Him. Now it happened, as He was dining in Levi's house, that many tax collectors and sinners also sat together with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many, and they followed Him.

Mark 2:14-15

In the New King James Version, “Levi” is italicized, meaning it was not in the original text and was added during the translation.

Italicized words indicated that the word had been added in order to provide clarity. Therefore, when you read the same verse in the Modern English Version, the word “Levi” is completely left out. It reads, *“As Jesus was at supper in his house...”*

We also read the story where Jesus healed the paralytic man, who was lowered through the roof of a house by his four, crazy, dedicated friends. There’s actually a lot of evidence to support the idea that Jesus’ house was the one where the roof was destroyed. And they knew it. That’s why the crowds were gathered there.

So, there’s no conclusive evidence that Jesus did not own a home. Personally, I believe He did.

When you look at His birth, His clothes, His friends, His ministry, and all the details of His life, you can clearly see that Jesus had wealth on earth. Favor attracts wealth. That doesn’t mean He *remained* wealthy, though.

For us, He gave up everything.

He Gave It All

The idea Jesus walked the earth as a poor man is incorrect. He had enough. He had extra. He was a blessing to people. A giver. He had money to fund His ministry and help people.

Then came the cross.

Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”).

Galatians 3:13

When Jesus willingly went to the cross, He took on the curse of the law. You can read about those curses in Deuteronomy 28:15-68.

Jesus died to take on those curses for you and me. I encourage you to go read those curses. They are extremely detailed. In fact, because of the detail of those curses, it will really bless you to realize everything from which Jesus has set you free!

It is so powerful.

Second Corinthians 5:21 says that God made Him to *be* sin. He never sinned, yet Jesus *became sin* on the cross. This perfect Man—sinless, spotless, without blemish—bore the sin of the world.

During His earthly ministry, Jesus lived a perfect, sinless life. He was healthy. He was wealthy. But when He died, He became cursed.

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.

2 Corinthians 8:9

Jesus became poor on that tree. Before that, He was rich. He lived a life where he had money, abundance, possessions, things. Then He gave everything up.

For you.

Only Three Days

Now behold, there was a man named Joseph, a council member, a good and just man. He had not consented to their decision and deed. He was from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who himself was also waiting for the kingdom of God. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a tomb that was hewn out of the rock, where no one had ever lain before.

Luke 23:50-53

Some have said that if Jesus was rich, He would have owned a tomb. He would have prepared for His death and His burial before He went to the cross. But He didn't have His own tomb. He wasn't buried in a family plot next to His earthly father, or other family. Nope, one was just donated to Him.

However, I have a different take. I think there are two possibilities of why Jesus didn't have a tomb, and neither reason is because He couldn't afford one.

One reason could be because He was cursed when He died. Not having a family plot to be buried in could certainly be considered a curse. Therefore, He wouldn't have had His own tomb.

Another reason is one I think is also very likely. Listen, Jesus was only going to need a tomb for three days! Why buy one when your body isn't going to stay there? There is no such thing as a vacation graves rental! You can't lease a tomb.

I also find it interesting that it is specifically pointed out that this was a tomb in which no one had ever lain before. It's reminiscent of the colt, the brand-new donkey no one else had ever ridden. When Jesus needed something provided to Him, it was quality!

Either way, the absence of a personal tomb for Jesus was in no way due to a lack of funds. It was either part of the curse, or Him being a good steward of His finances—or both!

The Worst Poverty

What is the definition of poverty? What does it mean to be poor, in the worst sense of the word? This is a topic that has garnered a lot of research. In all the debate and study, poverty is a relative term. What is considered poor isn't the same on every continent. Through my ministry travels, I've seen a stark contrast where what is

considered poor in one region of the world might be considered rich in another.

For example, in Asia, I've witnessed children who live in trash dumps. They forage through what has been discarded by others for their clothing. That's poverty. In America, someone might be considered poor if they shop at a discount store for their clothing. There is a huge gap between shopping for clean, used clothing for sale and having to scrounge through a dump to find something to wear.

Poor does not mean the same everywhere. That's why they've done studies to determine the areas with the world's worst poverty. There is a certain level of poverty that crosses all cultural and geographic divides. This is the kind of poor that, no matter where you live, you would agree.

What these studies have determined is that nakedness and thirst are the defining characteristics of the world's worst poverty. It doesn't matter if you live in Africa, Asia, South America, Europe, or the United States: if you are naked and thirsty, you know poverty.

The thing about this definition that strikes me is that Jesus knew true poverty.

After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, "I thirst!"

John 19:28

When Jesus was on the cross, He was naked and thirsty. No matter where you live, or what time in history you've lived, He faced the same poverty anyone has experienced when He hung on the cross for us. He became poor so that we wouldn't have to (2 Corinthians 8:9).

He Changed Everything

Jesus' story of poverty doesn't end there, though. When He freely gave His life, He changed everything. Scripture says the moment Jesus died, the veil in the temple—which separated mankind from the glory of God—was torn in two from top to bottom. Jesus' death gave us full access to the glory of God.

This was a request Moses made to God, now fulfilled for us all.

And he said, "Please, show me Your glory."

Exodus 33:18

This word for "glory" is *kabowd*, which means abundance, riches, honor, splendor, and dignity of position. When the veil was torn, God gave us access to His glory, His riches, and His abundance. Jesus died in abject poverty so that we could have access to His riches.

This perfectly illustrates 2 Corinthians 8:9, our key scripture here. Jesus became poor so that, through His poverty, we could be made rich. He experienced true poverty. He was naked. He was thirsty. When He asked for water, they gave him bitter wine. He experienced pain. He took on the punishment of sin. All so we could receive the glorious riches God has for us.

God wants you rich. Jesus paid this price for you in the most scandalous way by giving up everything and becoming truly impoverished on the cross. He became radically poor so we could be rich. That is God's will for you today. To live a righteous, holy, healthy, peaceful, and prosperous life.

That is the scandalous truth of the Gospel.

CHAPTER THREE

DON'T FALL FOR FAKE NEWS

WHAT OUR SOCIETY has begun to call “fake news” is all around us. No matter what opinion one person has, you can see someone else confidently declaring that the complete opposite is true. They can spout facts and figures, list statistics, quote experts, and twist them all around to mean whatever they choose.

Fake news can be found around every corner, even among Christian circles. However, there is only one truth, and that is found in the Word of God.

God's will for you is to be rich. We see that in Proverbs 10:22, where Scripture tells us, *“The blessing of the LORD makes one rich, and He adds no sorrow with it.”* But there is a tremendous amount of pushback against the idea that prosperity is a good thing, that it comes from God, that Jesus paid for it, and we can live it through faith in our lives today.

It's like we see fake news declaring, “Money is evil!” in every headline. I honestly felt like I *had arrived* when I saw a popular YouTuber trying to expose my teaching as false! Honestly, I get it. The truth that God wants you rich *is* scandalous! But it's still true.

The abundant, extravagant, overwhelming, excessive provision of God is found throughout the Word of God, in both the Old and the New Testaments.

Let's look again at 2 Corinthians, where it specifically mentions God's grace toward us and the abundance available for us to do His will.

And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.

2 Corinthians 9:8

When we're talking about being rich, we're talking about having our needs met and having extra. Enough that we can be a blessing. The question for us is, do we believe that? Are we willing to believe what the Scripture says? Or are we going to swallow the lies that the world is trying to force-feed us through fake news and misinterpreted Scripture?

The truth that God wants us to prosper financially is a hard concept for many of us to accept because we view truth through the lens of our own experiences, rather than taking God at His Word. We see poverty everywhere. We've experienced it, or are still experiencing it, ourselves. However, looking to experience to define truth is just another example of accepting fake news.

Sometimes, when you ask people why they won't believe God for healing, they'll often give the answer of, "I've never seen it." Or perhaps they mention a family member or friend who has died. They have elevated their experiences over God's promises and use them as a way to back-up their unbelief.

You'll often see that same mindset on the subject of financial prosperity. They don't believe God wants them to prosper because they never have. But here's the truth: if we want to see the Word of God manifest in our lives, we've got to believe what the Word says over what we feel or experience. God is our provider, and He proves that over and over again in Scripture.

We need to stop defining truth by our experiences and start defining truth by what the Word of God says. To repeat and

emphasize what Carlie often says, “Our physical condition does not determine our spiritual position.”

In other words, whatever is going on in our lives does not change the Word of God or who we are in Christ. Our experiences do not alter our inheritance as saints, God’s promises toward us, or God’s abundant nature. The Word of God does not change based on our opinions or personal experiences. God’s Word is true. Always.

We can believe the Bible, even when our experiences say otherwise because it is Scripture, and our experiences are not!

Natural vs. Spiritual Truth

Before we more deeply address the issue of believing God for financial increase, we need to continue to address the issue of spiritual truth. Natural circumstances may define your situation in one way, but what is the truth according to the Word of God?

Let me use healing again as an example. Say you are experiencing a symptom of sickness. Natural, physical “truth” says that you’re sick. However, spiritual truth is that by the stripes of Jesus, you were already healed (1 Peter 2:24). If you also believe the foundational spiritual truth that God truly *wants you well*, you won’t allow room for doubt.

Often, we don’t necessarily question God’s nature but His willingness. We may believe, in general, God wants us well. But this time? This time, too? With this health issue, also?

Yes. This time. Every time. God wants you well.

Every time someone came to Jesus for healing, He healed them. He had a healing ministry. And as Jesus said to Phillip, “If you’ve seen me, you’ve seen the Father” (John 14:9). Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. God doesn’t change. He always wants you healthy and whole.

Similarly, Jesus became poor at the same time He bore your sickness and the punishment for your sin. He did this so you and I could experience the riches He has for us. This is the truth from God's Word, yet it offends so many people: believers and unbelievers alike.

For many, this scandalous truth isn't troublesome to their belief system as a result of thinking it's a false doctrine. It's actually offensive to them because they simply haven't experienced this truth in the natural world, in their own personal circumstances. If someone is poor, they think this promise is untrue, as though God's promises come to pass automatically.

Salvation doesn't happen automatically: we must believe and receive Jesus as our Savior. Our bodies don't experience health simply because we were born again. We must first believe Jesus *wants* us healed. In the same way, experiencing the financial prosperity that God desires for us requires believing and receiving.

Healing and financial prosperity are both contentious topics in the Body of Christ because they are both areas where humanity seems to want something experiential to confirm the Scripture. God, however, wants us to stand on faith alone.

Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.

3 John 2

The word "prosper" in this verse means to have a financial abundance. Prosperity of three kinds is mentioned here: in your soul (mind, will & emotions), in your health, and in your finances. Isn't it interesting that healing and financial prosperity are mentioned together?

It's tragic that soul prosperity is where many Christians draw the line.

We need to accept that it is also God's will for us to be both healthy and rich. If we don't accept this, but instead look at our circumstances to define His will for us, we are missing this spiritual truth. Without this confirmation deep inside us, we won't be able to receive and see the blessing in our lives.

Take Deuteronomy, for example. Here He shows us how He provided for the Israelites even in the midst of a dry, barren desert.

He humbled you and let you suffer hunger, and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man does not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD.

Deuteronomy 8:3 MEV

The Word of God is what gives us the power in this life to prosper. Instead of speaking it out, however, many people speak words of unbelief and then wonder why they aren't seeing financial blessings manifested in their life.

Have you ever said something like, "I just can't get ahead," or "I'll never be wealthy," or "Money doesn't grow on trees"? Our mouths can be our own worst enemy. (And just for the record, what's money made of? Paper. And where does paper come from? Trees. We've been lied to: money does grow on trees!)

Let's look again in Deuteronomy at God's provisions for His children.

Your clothing did not wear out on you, nor did your feet swell these forty years.

Deuteronomy 8:4 MEV

When God provides for us, He does it thoroughly. And His supply doesn't run out. While the children of Israel wandered in the desert for forty years, their clothes endured. Even their feet didn't swell. How much more of a covenant with God do we have now because of Jesus than they had back then?

God Commands Your Blessing

There are two types of Christians: those who are born again, are blessed, and believe it and those who are born again, are blessed, but don't believe it.

It really is that simple. If you are born again, you are blessed. And the blessing of the Lord makes one rich. He adds no sorrow to it.

In Deuteronomy, Scripture describes God's blessing on you as a commandment.

The LORD will command the blessing on you in your storehouses and in all to which you set your hand, and He will bless you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

Deuteronomy 28:8

He commands it. That's a strong word. When God commands something, it is done. No questions asked. He speaks and worlds are formed.

This verse in Deuteronomy is saying that your wealth has been commanded by God. He is commanding blessings over your life. Even before you existed, before you were a twinkle in your parents' eyes, God commanded blessings over you and everything you put your hand to do.

Wealth Is Part of Your Blessing

Earlier, we discussed that God wants you rich because He loves you. We looked in Genesis 22:14, where God is called Jehovah Jireh, which means “provider.” He’s a good Father who loves His children and provides for them.

God wanting you rich is also simply a part of His blessing. Riches, or financial prosperity of any kind, is never mentioned in the Bible as a curse but always as a blessing.

From day one in Genesis 1:28, God’s entire purpose for mankind was for us to increase with abundance. Having our needs met and more has always been a blessing from God. Not having our needs met was always described as a curse.

The same goes for healing. Being healthy and whole is always described as a blessing, while sickness was considered a curse. These blessings and curses are listed very clearly in Deuteronomy 28.

It doesn’t matter if you’re reading in the Old or New Testament, richness is considered a blessing. The only exceptions are when man began to put more trust in their wealth than in the God who had given them their wealth, like the rich young ruler. That young man didn’t have wealth; his wealth had him. His heart was too wrapped up in trusting his money, so he couldn’t do what Jesus asked (Mark 10:17-22). If he *had* sold all of his possessions and followed Jesus, I believe everything he sacrificed would have been restored to him.

*So Jesus answered and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel’s, who shall not receive a hundredfold **now in this time**—houses and brothers and*

sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life.”

Mark 10:29-30

Judas is another New Testament example of a person who put his trust, his love, in money rather than in the God who blessed him with it. He regularly stole from Jesus' ministry funds and, ultimately, betrayed Him for thirty pieces of silver. His heart didn't understand the source, or the true purpose, behind God's blessing, so he abused and misused it.

Those are examples of people who have a wrong heart toward finances, but we should look to God's perspective to ensure we don't fall for the fake news' perspective of focusing on the negative.

Consider the love story of Ruth and Boaz. He was a rich man—a good, godly man—and the fact that Ruth ended up married to him was an obvious blessing. Even today, Christian women use the tongue-in-cheek phrase, “Finding my Boaz” to describe finding a financially secure, godly husband!

Also, in the New Testament, the Good Samaritan was obviously a rich merchant. If he wasn't wealthy, he would not have been able to provide for the man who was robbed and beaten.

Somehow, though, we've twisted wealth around to be unholy or disgraceful. Many Christians believe you should be ashamed of having money. Some are *proud* to be living in poverty, in worn clothing, and hungry, as though it is a badge of honor. However, poverty does not bring glory to God.

The Spiritual Dyslexia of Religion

Instead of seeing God as a Father who wants to bless and provide for His children, religion says that sickness will teach you something,

or that it's even God's will for you to be sick. I've heard some say a person's sickness may bring honor to God.

But God is a healer. "Healer" is one of the seven redemptive names of God. Jesus' ministry was a healing ministry. He was always on His way to heal someone or on His way back from healing someone. He healed everyone who came to Him.

It's the same with wealth. Instead of viewing wealth as godly, as it equips you to help more people, it's considered selfish and worldly.

There are religious people who doubt God wants you well, and there are religious people who doubt God wants you rich. They see poverty as righteous and sickness as holy. Religion is like spiritual dyslexia. They read a scripture and get the meaning backward. They take promises in the Word of God call them evil.

Religion flips everything upside down.

Doesn't that sound like something the enemy would do? Take a promise from God and twist it to look like something not from God?

Isaiah 5:20 says, "*Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil.*" In the next verse, it goes on to say, "*Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes.*" Religion will convince you it's wrong to be wealthy. That you're more holy if you're poor. When you compare this to what the Bible actually says, it is clearly the language of the enemy.

Jesus said it is the thief, the enemy, who comes to steal, kill, and destroy. The enemy has been stealing from you, but Jesus came to give abundant life (John 10:10).

Our God is always about abundance.

This does not mean if you are experiencing lack at the moment, you are cursed. Galatians 3:13 assures us that Jesus redeemed us

from the curse. For the born-again believer, there is no curse. Jesus paid it all.

The point I hope you take deep into your heart is that richness is a blessing from God. It's always a blessing. But we won't learn to live in that blessing if we do not reject the fake news and accept the scandalous truth. We must know and believe the true will of God regarding His blessing of wealth for His children.

Poverty Isn't Holiness

Having abundance is a blessing. If poverty was holy, then the homeless would be the most righteous among us. And if you've ever lived in want and lack, you know what I mean. There's nothing fun or blessed about it.

My wife and I started out with very little. I remember asking Carlie's father for her hand in marriage. His first question was, "How are you going to provide for her?"

I told him the Lord would provide, and He said, "I know the Lord is going to provide, but how are *you* going to provide for her?" I realized I had to get busy! It was time for me to put my hands to labor. I started doing extra odd jobs to earn money.

When we got married, I worked as a youth pastor, and Carlie worked at a church coffee shop. To say things were tight is being generous! We'd go to the supermarket with only enough money to buy cereal or coffee. Pick one. We couldn't afford both.

I remember thinking, *Man, am I going to spend the day tired or hungry?* It was either food or coffee. That was a big decision to make. I had to pray about that one!

Without money, our choices were drastically limited. And I suppose I can't speak for anyone else, but at no point did that feel like a blessing to me!

Wealth Is Not Selfish

God not only wants our needs met, He also wants us to have an abundance. However, that is not a truth many easily accept. When Scripture speaks of riches, many believe that is only referring to spiritual wealth. They feel that it is selfish to accept that God wants us financially wealthy.

Truthfully, it's the opposite.

The scandalous truth is that it is actually selfish to *not* believe God wants us to have resources. If God gives us extra, that equips us to be greater givers. God told Abraham, "I'm going to bless you and make you great. And you're going to be a blessing to many" (Genesis 12:2). That mirrors the same sentiment we see in 2 Corinthians.

And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.

2 Corinthians 9:8

Believing God for riches is a godly thing to do. Believing God wants you poor is selfish. With less, you will do less for others. You can help some, but your impact can be greatly magnified with wealth. More resources means more help to more people. You'll be equipped "for every good work" so that you can show His love to more of the people He cherishes.

God Has Expensive Tastes

Our heavenly Father is not a God who values poverty. I honestly don't understand where this idea comes from, other than a blatant lie of the devil! All you have to do is read the Bible, and you can clearly see that God has expensive tastes.

Both the original tabernacle and Solomon's Temple are described as being opulent. The framework, the Ark of the Covenant, pillars, lampstands, furnishings, tapestries—all were created from the finest materials by the most skilled craftsmen. God's temple was no run-down shack!

When Solomon asked the Lord for wisdom to rule His people, God also blessed him with so much wealth that he is known as the richest man to have ever lived. Even the Queen of Sheba was astonished by his wealth—and his wisdom, of course!

The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, the fifth sardonyx, the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst.

Revelation 21:19-20

That description is simply of the *foundations* of the New Jerusalem! Now, in modern construction, the foundation is certainly the most vital part of construction. However, the most *valuable*? Certainly not!

Each of the twelve gates of the city are made of a *single* pearl. Those must come from some crazy-big oysters! The streets are not *paved* with gold, as some Christians will say. No, the streets *are pure gold*! Streets made of gold.

No one on earth builds the foundation of their home with sapphire or emeralds or installs a solid gold driveway. Yet, we are supposed to believe that our God enjoys poverty? I don't think so.

To believe poverty is somehow a blessing is allowing religion to twist the abundant nature of God into something wrong or shameful. Having abundance for every good work is a blessing and promise from God. Richness is a blessing. Poverty is a curse. And God redeemed you from the curse.

God wants you to have more than enough. He wants you to be a giver. To have abundance. Whether you are experiencing it now or not, God wants you rich. After all, you are His heir. He hasn't left you penniless; He's left you an inheritance!

The Root of Covetousness

Although it is true that spiritual dyslexia causes a lot of wrong thinking regarding the Gospel, the root cause of the anger at others' prosperity is simply covetousness.

Years ago, while helping to plant a new church, I worked a job on the side buying and selling vehicles wholesale. I'd find good deals on vehicles and then flip them for a profit. God really blessed the work of my hands as I worked this business, and I prospered!

During this time, I found a great deal on a nearly new Jaguar. It was a sweet ride and not a vehicle I could sell right away. The necessary paperwork hadn't yet arrived. So, in the meantime, I would drive it to church, and I can't tell you how many people this offended.

People would ask all the time, "Is that your car?" I'd tell them, "Yes." And they'd ask, "Is it paid for?" I'd say, "Yes, I paid cash for it." The funny thing is, I also owned an old truck. When I drove *that* to church, no one was offended. But when I drove the Jaguar, people got really upset.

One person, who obviously couldn't believe I could afford such a vehicle, asked me one day, "How did you get that car?"

I told them, “I stole it!”

They didn’t find that terribly funny.

Their issue wasn’t actually with *my* prosperity, the issue was with *their lack* of it. If we’ve got an issue with our neighbor’s car, it’s probably not our neighbor’s car we’ve got a problem with: it’s *our* car that bothers us.

Those people weren’t bothered by my Jaguar. They were bothered by the vehicle *they* owned. They wanted more or better, but they had less. If they had a nice vehicle, or even just a nicer vehicle than my Jaguar, they wouldn’t have had a problem with my car.

Covetousness is often at the root of us misunderstanding the biblical blessing of prosperity. If we would simply read the Bible, without man’s ideas getting in and twisting things around, we’d see this promise clearly. Instead, man’s interpretations—which can be easily influenced by their own misunderstanding—cause us to also misunderstand Scripture.

I’ve actually known churches that will purposefully underpay their pastor as a way of “keeping him humble.” Jesus addressed foolishness such as this when He said, “The tradition of man has made the Word of God of none effect” (Matthew 15:6; Mark 7:13).

The Word of God is powerful. He has spoken a blessing over you. The only way that blessing doesn’t come to pass is if you choose not to believe it.

Shifting Our Attitude to Receive

I used to be one of those people offended by someone else’s nice vehicle. My neighbor’s, in fact. He had two brand-new pickup trucks. Two! Why in the world did he need two brand-new pickup trucks?

One would always sit in the drive. The other he used for work. And it slowly drove me nuts. Even my kids noticed and delivered a

harsh wake-up call one day. They told me, “Dad, why are you so mad at his pickup trucks? It’s got nothing to do with you.” That stung.

The truth was, I was jealous. He had two brand-new pickup trucks, and I didn’t even have one.

I had to shift my attitude and my perspective. Later on, when God gave me a brand-new pickup truck, suddenly my anger for my neighbor disappeared. I wasn’t mad at him anymore. And that was when my finances really started to increase.

Remember when Judas criticized using expensive oil to anoint Jesus? With what I believe was fake outrage, he declared, “That could have been sold to feed the poor!” Have you ever heard anyone say something similar about wealthy Christians?

Listen, I just want to give you a well-intentioned warning. David, before he was king, put it brilliantly, when he said to King Saul, *“Look, this day your eyes have seen that the Lord delivered you today into my hand in the cave, and someone urged me to kill you. But my eye spared you, and I said, ‘I will not stretch out my hand against my lord, for he is the Lord’s anointed.’”*

King Saul had arguably made some bad decisions. He had been hunting David down and trying to kill him. Yet David realized, *Even though Saul is trying to kill me, I’m not dumb enough to hurt someone who is anointed by God.*

There are a lot of wonderful ministers of the Gospel who are extremely wealthy. Like David and Solomon, the Lord has greatly blessed them financially. We may judge them by their outward possessions, their million-dollar homes, expensive cars, or private jets.

But here is my warning: God has anointed them. We cannot truly not know the heart of another human being. Never allow covetousness to bring you to a place of false piousness, saying,

“Look at that wasteful spending! That could have been used to do good!” If you do that, you are just like Judas. I promise you, you do not want to have anything in common with that man.

These anointed people of God could be wealthy because they *are* being used to do good! Never judge someone else’s prosperity before you have personally examined their giving history. We are going to examine this later, but givers open themselves up to infinite harvest.

Your bad attitude, jealousy, and covetousness can actually keep you from receiving the blessing of God. Instead of being bitter and angry at those who have been blessed financially, give thanks for what you have and the blessing and favor upon your life. Give glory to God for blessing *them!* For if they have been blessed, you can be blessed as well! If you will change your attitude to one of thankfulness and praise, that alone can cause you to experience increase.

Blessings Establish God’s Covenant

If we’ll be honest with ourselves, we’ll admit having money is always better than not having money. Anyone saying they’d rather be poor is deceived and selfish. We cannot help people if we do not have the funds to do so. We can sometimes help people without money, but we will not be as effective.

For those who don’t want money, that’s fine. Just give it to me. I’ll put it to work!

I’ll use it to spread the Gospel around the world, feed the hungry, and provide medical aid for healing. If there’s anyone who doesn’t want money, I’ll happily take that burden off their hands and use it for the Kingdom of God.

Money is neither good nor evil. It is a tool. It's a tool that can be used for the Gospel.

Without money, we will face limitations. Lack limits our choices, our time, and our outreach. With it, we can free up our time to be used with greater impact for God, while also expanding our ability to help more people.

And you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day.

Deuteronomy 8:18

God gives us the power to obtain wealth so that we can spread the good news around the world and help God establish His covenant. He wants to show the world how much He loves them and desires a relationship with them, which happens through the spreading of the Gospel. But it takes money to tell people about Jesus.

I can hear your question, and the answer is: Yes, you can absolutely tell people about Jesus without money. However, the more money you have, the more you can spread His Word.

I can unashamedly tell you that Terradez Ministries is telling the world about how much Jesus loves them. We're letting people know the truth of who God is: God is a good God who only has good for you. He wants you well. He wants you healed. He wants you prospered. He wants you to live in peace. He wants you to live out all His promises for you.

We travel around the world, holding conferences and speaking at churches and live events. We have offices in the United States and South Africa, with plans to open more on other continents as well.

We broadcast the Abundant Life television program daily with a potential reach of 1.6 billion people. We're online, on social media, on Roku, on GospelTruth.TV. We are developing books and Bible study curriculum, and so much more. We believe God is calling us to do all of these things in order to spread the love of God around the world.

God wants people to realize how much He loves them. He wants His Word spread. He wants us to care for the poor, to feed and clothe the hungry, to provide medical care to those who can't afford it.

But all of this costs money. Physical resources are required to spread the Gospel and establish God's covenant in this world.

Are we, as the Body of Christ, supposed to allow the wicked and ungodly to hold all the finances for themselves? Absolutely not. The tragedy is this: if godly people continue to believe that wealth is evil, and shun it for that reason, they will not be able to make a difference in this world. They will not be able to do what God has instructed them to do.

The Wealthy Samaritan

I briefly mentioned this story earlier, but let's look more closely at the story of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10. Here, we're introduced to a wealthy man who used his money for the benefit of someone else. The Good Samaritan used his wealth for good. And yet, Christians today so often get angry at the idea of a wealthy servant of God.

The most pious of believers will say, "The greatest commandment the Lord ever gave us was to love our neighbors. That doesn't have anything to do with being rich!" That's fake news!

In fact, Jesus told this story in response to a lawyer (likely a wealthy man) who challenged Him in this by asking, "Well, who is my

neighbor?" He must not have thought everyone was worthy of his love.

Jesus responded by telling this story. Interestingly, the man who was mugged and beaten, left by the side of the road, was apparently a Jew. Someone who, according to the Jews, would have been "worthy" as a neighbor. Yet, he was ignored by both a priest and a Levite before the Samaritan came along.

Meanwhile, the Jews and Samaritans feuded like the Hatfields and McCoys, the Capulets and Montagues! They were *not* friends, and no Jew would have ever considered a Samaritan as a neighbor.

Yet, who was the one who acted in love toward this robbed and injured man? Was it the Jewish religious elites? No, not at all. It was a Samaritan, an enemy of the Jews. A Samaritan who just so happened to be a wealthy merchant!

So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

Luke 10:34

The Good Samaritan loaded up the beaten and battered man on his donkey, which could have been an SUV in today's standards, and took him to a hotel. He paid the hotel bill, including any food or medical attention this man would require.

In essence, he covered the hotel mini bar tab. And those aren't cheap! When we stayed in hotel rooms, I used to tell the kids not to eat anything out of the mini bar. Because the chocolate and sodas are so unreasonably expensive, that mini bar did not exist to us!

However, the Good Samaritan gave this perfect stranger total access to anything he needed or wanted. He promised the innkeeper, "No matter what the final bill, I'll cover it all" (Luke 10:35).

The aid he provided that poor man required money. Margaret Thatcher once said, “No one would remember the Good Samaritan if he’d only had good intentions; he had money, too.” And it’s true. The Good Samaritan wouldn’t even be in the Bible if he didn’t have money.

We need money to help people and to establish God’s covenant. This is why in my introduction I said that I would go so far as to say God not only wants you rich, but He *needs* you to be rich!

God needs our faith to move on this earth, and He needs us to have resources so we can touch the lives of people who are hurting.

This may look like laying hands on the sick and praying for them to be well. It may look like sharing the Good News of the love and salvation of Jesus. But it also may look like tipping that waitress \$100 for a \$20 meal because God knew she needed groceries to feed her family.

Do you know the old saying, “People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care”? God wants the world to know how much He loves them. One way we’re able to do that is by blessing them, providing for them, and giving to them. All of that requires money. And that’s why God wants you rich.

CHAPTER FOUR

KINGDOM ECONOMICS

AS I MENTIONED EARLIER, there are those who are blessed and believe it. And there are those who are blessed and don't believe it. If you're born again, you are blessed. But are you someone who believes it?

The spiritual truth is that you are already prosperous. As a son or daughter of God, you are rich in the Lord and rich in possessions, even if you don't yet see it in the natural.

As an example of this, let's consider Joseph.

Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. And Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him down there. The LORD was with Joseph, and he was a successful [prosperous] man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD made all he did to prosper in his hand.

Genesis 39:1-3 (brackets added)

God looked upon Joseph and said he was a prosperous man. Even his master, Potiphar, saw that he was blessed. But how can that be? How can God see someone who is a *slave* and yet call him prosperous?

Because prosperity isn't what we *have*, it's who we *are*.

Citizens of a New Kingdom

Many believers don't understand their identity as a prosperous person because they don't yet realize they have changed their address.

He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.

Colossians 1:13

When we become born again, God plucks us out of one kingdom—the kingdom of this natural world—and places us into a new Kingdom: the Kingdom of the Son of His love. As a born-again believer, you are now living spiritually in a different world. You've moved from the kingdom of darkness to the Kingdom of light. Spiritually speaking, the day you gave your life to Jesus, you changed address. You packed up and moved.

In a new kingdom, there are different rules, different ways of living, different ways of doing things. There are different laws in operation. One of the most frustrating things for Christians is when, after they have been born again, they continue to live as though they are not.

When my family and I moved to America, I got a quick lesson in how much your world can shift by simply changing your address. We moved from the kingdom of Great Britain to the kingdom of America, if you will. Well, in Great Britain, you drive on the left side of the road, while in America, you drive on the right.

One day, after we'd moved to America, I pulled out onto the road after leaving a gas station and began driving in the left lane. That was what I was used to doing. That was how we drove in my home country. It was natural to me. There was only one slight problem: the three cars driving head-on toward me in the left lane!

It didn't hit me at first. I thought, *Why are these idiots driving on the wrong side of the road?* While I quickly made an abrupt U-turn, they honked and gestured wildly at me. I think they were trying to tell me I was number one!

It didn't take me long to realize I couldn't keep driving like I'd always done. I wasn't in the kingdom of Great Britain anymore. I was in America. My address had changed, and I had to view things differently, and act accordingly.

If you don't know and understand the spiritual laws and principles of the Kingdom of God, you will only ever attain the same results and way of life as the world does.

Biblical truth takes natural thinking and reverses it.

The natural says, when dealing with your enemy, you seek vengeance. The Scripture says, when dealing with your enemy, you give them love. The natural says, when someone steals from you, you get your property back. The Scripture says, when someone steals from you—like taking your tunic—you give them more. You give them your jacket, also. When someone asks you to go with them a mile, Jesus said to go two miles. If you want to be greatest in Heaven, you become the least on earth. It says the last will be first.

The Bible shows us how to change our natural way of living and thinking to God's way. That's why we examine so much Scripture as we study this topic.

Romans 12:2 says, *"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."*

For us to experience the full spectrum of the blessing of God, we are going to have to align our perspective to God's way of seeing things. And this usually looks the complete opposite of the natural

world. The Kingdom of God simply doesn't operate in the same way as the world.

Natural vs. Kingdom Economics

Let's discover how the Kingdom of God operates in regard to finances.

Most of us grow up with a basic understanding of money. We work a job, collect a paycheck, use those funds for necessities or amusement, then do it all again. When we walk into a store, we realize that the goods or services provided will require us to pay for them.

We balance our checkbooks, knowing that we start with a beginning amount, deduct our expenses, and end up with an updated balance. Mathematics and accounting are inflexible sciences: the total is what it is. If we start with \$100 and deduct \$90 in expenses, the total is \$10. There is no alternative math that can give a different result. It is what it is, no more, no less.

However, Kingdom economics work differently, and sometimes the spiritual laws of God's economy aren't as easily quantified. It just doesn't always make logical sense! Let's go deeper and discover how God's economy works differently than the financial system of the world.

Later, we will discuss giving in more detail, but let's look at how giving—an integral part of Kingdom economics—turns natural economics on its head.

For example, here at Terradez Ministries, we have very close relationships with other ministries, and we give to them often. Those ministries love to plant seed into Terradez Ministries as well! Sometimes we hear it said, "It seems like all you do is give to each

other!” Well, that’s partially true! We do sow into each other’s ministries.

However, that brings up a very sincere question: “You have expenses of your own. It doesn’t make any sense for you to give to someone else’s ministry when you have your own bills to pay. What’s the point?”

That logic does make natural sense, doesn’t it? Why deduct from one ministry’s account to give to another ministry? Aren’t those dollars just as effective for the one as for the other?

Well, here’s the key I’ve been alluding to: kingdom economics work differently from natural economics. As the Body of Christ, we are meant to handle our finances from a spiritual perspective, not a natural one.

Let me explain.

Let’s say you earned \$100. If you pay your tithe, you will have \$90 remaining. However, your cell phone bill is \$80, which means you would only have \$10 left for groceries. No more, no less. It is what it is. Man, that extra \$10 could buy a whole lot of ramen noodles! Why give 10% to the Lord, when that \$10 could help you survive until the next paycheck?

This is the logic of the natural mind, based on natural principles of a natural economy.

Natural math tells us that $\$1 = \1 . Equal amounts are just that: perfectly equal. Therefore, if Terradez Ministries gave \$1000 to another ministry, and that ministry gave us \$1000 in return, isn’t that just an even exchange? Actually, no! Kingdom economics don’t adhere to the same natural rules.

If we keep our money for what we need, we are just like the world, where natural math says that $\$1 = \1 . That’s what we have. No more, no less. It is what it is. When we keep what we have to use

for our own needs, and nothing more, it will never have the Kingdom economy opportunity for limitless increase.

However, if you take money that you have, and give it to someone else, it suddenly becomes *seed*. Now supernatural growth has the opportunity to work. In Kingdom economics, money that is given away immediately appreciates in value: one dollar becomes greater than one dollar. When it is given away, it no longer carries its limited, natural value. Now it can grow and produce a harvest.

In the Beginning

The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food...

Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat."

Genesis 2:8-9; 15-16

What did God say that Adam could eat? Obviously, from the trees, right? Notice that God didn't say, "You may eat the crops you've cultivated." No, God specifically planted trees in the garden of Eden. There is a significant difference between produce from trees, and food that comes from cultivated crops.

If you plant a field of wheat, or corn, or barley, the grains grow for a relatively short season and then are harvested. Following the harvest, the ground must be tilled and the crops replanted. The process of planting and harvesting (sowing and reaping) continues, year after year.

On the other hand, consider produce that comes from trees. When a tree is planted, it usually takes years of growth before it ever matures and produces fruit! Yet, an apple tree doesn't need to be replanted after each harvest season. Instead, one seed is sown into the ground, and then it is watered and tended until it yields fruit. Then it continues to produce fruit, year after year.

Scandalous Increase

Most believers view Kingdom economics with the crop-planting perspective. They have the idea that when they plant a seed into the Kingdom economy, they can expect a single harvest in return. Perhaps 30-, 60-, or 100-fold, but no more than one harvest per seed. However, God's economy is far more plentiful!

Then Isaac sowed in that land, and reaped in the same year a hundredfold; and the LORD blessed him.

Genesis 26:12

You see, the spiritual, Kingdom economy works so much differently than in the natural. Sure, keeping what you have for yourself means that \$1 = \$1. But in God's economy, \$1 = 100-fold!

So, what is a hundredfold? Is it just $\$1 \times 100 = \1000 ? Actually, no! A hundredfold is infinitely larger.

Imagine a chessboard with 64 squares. On the first square, you place one grain of rice. On the second square you double it, placing two grains of rice. That would be 2-fold. Then on the third square, 4 grains of rice. For each square, the number of grains is doubled. By the time you got to 10-fold, you would have 512. What about 30-fold? Well, that would be an astonishing 536,870,912! By the time you reached the 64th square, you would have 9,223,372,036,854,743,040 grains of rice! That's a lot of stir-fry!

But Isaac received 100-fold in that same year (which was a year of famine, by the way)! So, what if that chess board had 100 squares?

633,825,300,114,112,448,948,537,917,440

For those of you who are super nerdy, that is 633 octillion!

A 100-fold return is so large, our little human brains can't even fathom it. In the Kingdom, \$1 = *infinity*—that is scandalous increase! Like a fruit tree, when you sow into the Kingdom of God, your seed may take time to produce fruit. But hold on! That seed will continue to produce fruit for you, year after year after year!

When I teach this concept, sometimes I use a physical representation to help show the “increase” in the 30-, 60-, and 100-fold harvest.

When you take a sheet of paper, and fold it once, that is one-fold. Fold it a second time, and it becomes two-fold, etc. It increases the same way as my previous example using the squares on a chess board.

In the natural, eventually you will come to a place where it is physically impossible to fold that paper any longer. Spiritually speaking, however, the fold continues, up to one hundredfold!

The fun thing is, when you do this with paper, you can easily see how the paper creates the “*increase*”—pun intended!

Living Billboards for Godly Increase

The reason the Body of Christ is supposed to give to one another is so that we can all abound in a supernatural way! God doesn't want His children to experience wealth and finances in the same way the world does. His desire is for the church to stand out, to be different.

Our lives shouldn't be the same as unbelievers' lives. We should be living billboards that advertise the supernatural blessing and favor of God. When the ungodly see us prosper, it should provoke a jealousy that urges them to want what we have, to desire the same relationship with God which causes us to stand out in such a marvelous way.

There are many examples in the Scripture of how God poured out His extravagant wealth on His children. Abraham and Lot were so wealthy, they couldn't even have their households near one another. The land couldn't support both of them at once (Genesis 13:2-6).

Isaac, after increasing a hundredfold in a year of famine, became so prosperous that the Philistine King, Abimelech, told him, "*Go away from us, for you are much mightier than we*" (Genesis 26:12-16). Think about that: Isaac was wealthier, had more resources, and was more powerful than the entire *nation* of the Philistines! That is scandalous.

When the children of Israel were delivered out of slavery from Egypt, they didn't leave empty-handed. God told them to simply ask their Egyptian neighbors for their gold, silver and clothing—and they gave it to them! Not to Moses and Aaron, but to the people.

Now the children of Israel had done according to the word of Moses, and they had asked from the Egyptians articles of silver, articles of gold, and clothing. And the Lord had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they granted them what they requested. Thus they plundered the Egyptians...A mixed multitude went up with them also, and flocks and herds—a great deal of livestock.

Exodus 12:35-36, 38

The birth of the official Hebrew nation began by delivering them from over four hundred years of slavery into incredible wealth. And that wealth only continued to grow!

When Moses was overseeing the construction of the tabernacle, the people brought *“freewill offerings every morning.”*

Then all the craftsmen who were doing all the work of the sanctuary came...and they spoke to Moses, saying, “The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work which the Lord commanded us to do.” So Moses gave a commandment...And the people were restrained from bringing, for the material they had was sufficient for all the work to be done—indeed too much.

Exodus 36:3-7

They gave so *much*, and still had even more possessions to give freely, Moses had to tell them to stop! That is extravagant wealth.

Years later, when funds were being raised for the building of the temple, first David gave of his own personal wealth, *“three thousand talents of gold...seven thousand talents of refined silver...the gold for things of gold and the silver for things of silver, and for all kinds of work to be done...”* (1 Chronicles 29:3-5).

Then the leaders...of the tribes of Israel... offered willingly. They gave for the work of the house of God five thousand talents and ten thousand darics of gold, ten thousand talents of silver, eighteen thousand talents of bronze, and one hundred thousand talents of iron. And whoever had precious stones gave them to the treasury of the house of the LORD... Then the people rejoiced, for they had offered willingly, because with a loyal heart they

had offered willingly to the LORD; and King David also rejoiced greatly.

1 Chronicles 29:6-9

For the Temple, the total value of the silver and gold *alone* was an estimated \$217 *billion* in today's currency! That doesn't even include the value of the bronze, iron, ivory, or cedar.

My point here isn't even to focus on the willing hearts of these children of God to give freely to Him in worship, although that is a beautiful part of giving we should learn from. The point is: this is the wealth that the Israelites had! Not just the King, but the *citizens themselves* were wealthy beyond measure.

God wants you rich, too!

CHAPTER FIVE

RICHES BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH

THE BIBLE CLEARLY SHOWS that our heavenly Father has extravagant tastes, and He loves us so much, He wants to share that extravagance with us. He did it with Abraham and Isaac, with the entire nation of Israel, with King David and King Solomon, and so many other times throughout history.

When Jesus died, He paid the price to redeem us from the curse of poverty. He became sin so we could be made righteous, He bore all sickness and disease so we could be healthy and whole, and He became poor so that we, through His poverty, might be made rich.

All the promises of God are freely given to us by His grace. We cannot earn them, and we can certainly never deserve them.

However, going too far into grace makes us complacent. We learn of God's promises, and we believe them, but then we'll wait for something to happen as if by magic. Righteous living, finances, godly relationships, opportunities, peace, wealth, or healing: we expect them to just fall into our laps from Heaven, simply appearing one day without any action on our part.

On the other hand, sometimes we acknowledge that we have a part to play but go too far into that direction. We can become extreme and turn our faith in God into our faith in our works. We no longer believe only in the promises of God, we believe that what we *do* will ensure that these promises will manifest in our lives. We think that if we do specific behaviors, then what we are believing for will happen. We start believing in our works.

The truth is, everything you need has already been taken care of. Jesus already provided it for you by His grace at the cross, and your faith activates it.

If you are born again, then you are already prosperous on the inside. Prosperity is who you are. It's your identity. Just like you are a healed person or a righteous person, you are also a prosperous person.

However, none of these promises from God are automatic. If that were true, everyone would be healed all the time. Everyone would be saved. It is, without a doubt, God's will for all to be saved because He does not will any to perish, but His will does not automatically come to pass.

We have our part to play. Remember, I misunderstood this principle. I thought because my family relocated to attend Bible college, that I didn't have to work. I didn't need to set my hand to anything. People would just throw money at my feet, and our family would be miraculously provided for.

Yet, as an able-bodied man, I was perfectly capable of setting my hand to something. I had misunderstood the promises of God, and thus found myself in a world of financial hurt! As I mentioned earlier, God's grace came through for me: He showed me where I had been mistaken, He corrected me, and then He covered for my mistake.

But after that, I realized I couldn't just sit at home and wait for His provision to drop in my lap from Heaven! He had promised that He would bless the work of my hands, so I had to set my hands to some work for Him to bless. I did so, and He did what He had promised. It wasn't only by His grace that I received His blessing, but through my faith—and action that was motivated by my faith, as well.

Accessing Grace by Faith

So, how do we access this grace of God in our finances so that we have enough for ourselves and enough to help others? Do we have to sacrifice something, like in the Old Testament Law? Do we have to work ourselves to the bone, by the sweat of our brow, like Adam had to after the fall?

No, God is not requiring you to sacrifice your health, your family, your joy, or anything else for this blessing. However, we do have a role to play in bringing this blessing about.

I once prayed, "God, why does 2 Corinthians 9:8 say You are *able* to make all grace abound toward me? Why doesn't it say that You *do* or that You *will*?"

He replied to me, "*Because this grace of blessing in your finances comes to you the same way as any other promise of My grace: by you believing it and receiving it through faith*" (Ephesians 2:8).

Through whom [Jesus] also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand...

Romans 5:2 (brackets added)

Every promise of God is accessed by His grace through our faith in those promises. The actions that we take, *motivated by our faith in the promises of God*, are important. Then God will take what we do and multiply it because He's a God of abundance.

Both Grace and Faith

When I was new in my walk with God, I used to think that if I had enough faith, I could move the arm of God. If my faith was right and pure, I could talk God into doing whatever it was I was asking Him for. Hear me on this: God's arm already moved 2,000 years ago! Jesus did everything He is going to do. Nothing else is needed on

God's part. That's why Jesus said, "It is finished," just moments before He died (John 19:30). His work was done.

Jesus is grace personified. When He came to earth, that was God's supernatural gift of provision for us. That's the grace part. Jesus already provided everything we need. Our part is having the faith to receive it, and the physical actions we take as a result naturally flow from our faith.

For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.

2 Corinthians 1:20

For every one of God's promises, He says, "Yes, I want to give it to you." Then it's up to you to say, "Amen, I receive it." You do this by faith, and faith involves action, in both word and deed.

This isn't about forcing the hand of God. That's impossible. It isn't about acting in faith so that God will do something. Faith is about realizing He's already done it and agreeing with Him by what you say and do.

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Hebrews 11:1

Faith isn't just a thought, or an abstract concept. Faith has substance. Faith can be seen. How do we witness faith? By the words and actions that flow from it.

We can't talk about faith without talking about works. Why? Because the Bible doesn't! Faith and works are fundamentally linked to one another.

Grace has provided our prosperity, and faith is our response. So how can we remain balanced when it comes to receiving blessing from God by grace, through faith, while still recognizing that certain actions we take are necessary? How do we trust God, rather than in the quality and efficiency of our own efforts?

The key is learning the difference between works of the flesh and works of faith.

Faith Without Works Is Dead

Here is another scandalous truth: your actions cannot save you. Neither can they cause you to experience the fullness of health and prosperity the Lord wants you to have. However, the Word of God is very clear that faith *alone* is also not enough to experience the promises of God.

So also faith, if it does not have works (deeds and actions of obedience to back it up), by itself is destitute of power (inoperative, dead).

James 2:17 AMPC

If you say you believe something, but what you say you believe isn't supported by your actions, that "faith" is powerless! It cannot receive from God. This verse isn't talking about actions that somehow *prove* that you have faith. Powerful faith produces actions that come as an effortless result of what you truly believe.

Again, I'm going to use an example regarding healing. Works of the flesh, or actions which come from natural wisdom, cannot bring total health to your body. Can you exercise, eat the right things, take all your vitamins, and experience a higher level of health than those who don't take those actions? Of course! Yet, those are merely works of the flesh. If the doctor gives you an incurable diagnosis,

you're going to need the divine healing Jesus purchased for you on the cross.

In the same way, can you be wise with your finances, get a good education, make incredible business decisions, and increase through natural wisdom and hard work? Of course! Those are works of the flesh which have provided wealth to many people, believers and unbelievers alike. However, how much more profitable could your life be if you accessed God's supernatural wisdom, provision and wealth Jesus has provided for you?

My point is that you can live a healthy and wealthy life by making good decisions according to this natural world, but you will never achieve the highest levels of health and wealth by performing actions based on worldly wisdom. Works of the flesh can only take you so far before your human ability and strength are tapped out.

However, the grace of God within you—which can empower you to receive everything God has for you—never runs out. That supply of grace is infinite. And that is the supply of grace you need to fuel the works which come from faith—the works that are truly of faith, full of power, that will bring supernatural results.

Works of Faith

If I told you there was a million dollars buried in your back yard, and you believed me, you would immediately head outside to dig! You'd pick up the phone and call your spouse, saying, "Honey! There's a million dollars buried in our back yard! Come home right now and help me dig!" You would tear up that yard until you found the money I had promised you! Your words to your spouse, plus the corresponding action of digging, show your faith.

If I gave you a pouch of seeds and said, "Each one of these seeds will produce a money tree." I imagine you'd plant as many of those seeds as you could fit on your property. You'd work hard,

toiling through the night, recruiting friends and family to help you plant, until each seed was securely planted in the ground.

Those may be silly examples, but they show what works of faith look like. The actions taken were a visible sign that you believed what I spoke to you. True belief changes how we speak, how we act, how we carry ourselves, and the decisions we make.

Here is another completely hypothetical example, but let's say you're experiencing vertigo issues. The doctors don't understand why you are feeling dizzy all the time. Your habits—natural works of the flesh—are to eat a low-sodium diet, exercise five days a week, and stay away from refined sugars.

Now, as you are seeking wisdom from God, and believing Him for supernatural healing, you hear the still small voice of the Holy Spirit give you some natural direction: eat bacon three days a week. *Bacon, Lord?* You think to yourself. *Why would You tell me to eat bacon?* But you know the voice of God, and you are confident it was an instruction from Him to take an action that will help you. So, you start eating bacon three days a week at breakfast. Soon, the dizziness is gone, and you feel completely well!

Your lifestyle of good choices which contributed to your good health were works of the flesh. They were worldly wisdom which certainly helped you to have a healthy body. Yet, when you believed that God had spoken to you, your obedience was a work of faith. Eating bacon three days a week (I can certainly get on board with that one!) was also a work, an action, a physical deed. The difference was that eating bacon was a work *that stemmed from faith in what God had instructed you to do*, not based on worldly wisdom. Your faith could be seen by others in the obedient action of eating bacon.

It is really important for me to establish this understanding in you because I am going to be giving you some godly wisdom, physical

actions to take, that will activate God's riches in your life. If you don't understand the difference between works of the flesh and works of faith, you can easily fall into the trap of, "Ashley told me these actions will result in my increase. It worked for him, so I'm gonna do it, too. Therefore, I'm going to do this, and this, and that, and God will bless me."

This trap doesn't just end with putting your trust in your own actions, or your ability to perform those actions well. It also can result in burnout. Works of the flesh tap into energy of the flesh. Works that emanate from faith tap into spiritual energy—the grace of God, which is a well that never runs dry.

Yes, the wisdom I'm going to give you comes from spiritual principles that are effective. However, I don't want you to take any action just because I tell you to do so. My desire is that you recognize that the wisdom I share with you comes from the Word of God, that you then believe the Word of God, and that the action you take flows from your faith in what the Word of God says. Not because Ashley says, but because the Bible says!

The mission statement of Terradez Ministries is, "Empowering Believers in the Promises of God."

What I'm sharing with you today is the fulfillment of that mission statement. When you take action that is flowing from, and empowered by, your faith in the grace of God, you will experience the fullness of all of God's promises for you!

If you are willing and obedient, You shall eat the good of the land.

Isaiah 1:19

Willingness and obedience. Willingness is referring to faith, while obedience is referring to action. Are you ready and willing to believe

it's God's will for you to prosper? And, if so, are you going to follow through with action supported by biblical direction?

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

James 1:22

When you hear the truth in the Word of God, and refuse to act on the faith that it sparks in you, you are deceived. If you think the blessing of God will just automatically come to pass in your life, you will miss out on all the wonderful promises God has made to you.

Will life always be easy? Of course not. Jesus promised us that in this world, we will face trouble, but to stay joyful in the face of those challenges because He has overcome them (John 16:33). Even in the face of tribulation in your life, Jesus has made you an overcomer!

For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

1 John 5:4-5

From Supernatural to Natural

We are prosperous the moment we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior. We are prosperous on the inside. Our riches are within us, deposited there by God. Richness is part of our DNA now. We've been designed to succeed in every area.

However, how do we move that richness from the supernatural to the natural? How do we get it from our spirit to our soul? At the end of the day, we live in the natural world. And the natural world only

takes actual, physical currency. Try buying groceries with spiritual richness. You're going to starve.

We need to see our prosperity manifested.

When my wife and I first got married, we had nothing. I used to tell people we were so poor that we couldn't pay attention. I remember going to the grocery store and needing to decide between buying cereal or buying coffee. There simply wasn't money for both. That was not a great day.

So, we've had lack in our lives. We've lived through times where the money wasn't there to do what we wanted. It didn't, however, change who we were. We were still prosperous on the inside, and that's how you must always see yourself. You need to see yourself as God sees you. Once you do that, you can take the practical steps to make it manifest.

Our Two Faith Responses

Is God sovereign? Yes. Is He all powerful? Yes. Is He all controlling? No. He has given mankind free will. So, we have authority and decisions to make here on earth.

When it comes to our prosperity, Jesus has already done the hard part. He did all the work. But you have to receive it.

That doesn't mean adding to it or even trying to make it happen. It means receiving in faith what Jesus has already accomplished. Proverbs 13:4 describes our faith response as diligence: *"...the soul of the diligent shall be made rich."*

That means putting your hand to something. God will bless the work of our hands, but our hands do have to be working. There's action required there. Maybe you work a business or a job. Regardless of what we do, we're faithful and diligent workers. We're putting our hands to something.

By doing this, we're giving God something to bless and multiply. So, first, we work. Then, we give. Proverbs 11:25 says, "*The generous soul will be made rich.*"

Even though God has already made us rich, we must play our part to activate that blessing through these two actions: diligence and generosity.

CHAPTER SIX

FAITH-FILLED DILIGENCE

WHEN WE ATTENDED BIBLE SCHOOL, we left our business behind and relocated to the other end of the country. I thought, because I was going to school full time as a minister, that money would simply appear.

It had happened before. During my youth pastor days, I prayed to God earnestly for ten pounds, which was about fifteen bucks. I begged, “I need ten pounds. You can just rain money out of Heaven.” While praying, I reached over and picked up a C.S. Lewis book and ten pounds floated out from between the pages. It hit me right in the face. God made money, literally, rain down from Heaven.

Or...it was a present from my grandma, or an anonymous gift. Who can be sure?

But, hey, I received it as a miracle. The timing, the amount—it was awesome! Because of that experience—and remember, we aren’t supposed to determine truth by our experiences—I thought that was how God always provided. However, that isn’t the way God’s provision works. Usually, He provides for us through the work of our hands, by bringing us supernatural increase through our diligence.

Don’t Despise the Little

We have to give God something to work with. **A hundred fold of nothing is nothing.** Even when there was supernatural provision in the Old or New Testaments, God asked people to put their hands to something. Many times, what God told them to do seemed like a

very small, insignificant thing. The resources they had to work with didn't seem like a whole lot. However, whatever you have in your hand, whatever you can set your hands to, don't ever despise the little! Allow God to work with it, and you.

In 2 Kings 4, a man had died, leaving his widow with a large debt. It was so large that their two sons were to be sold into slavery to pay it off. In desperation, the woman went to Elisha to inquire of the Lord. He asked her, "*What do you have in the house?*" She replied, "*Your maidservant **has nothing** in the house but a jar of oil.*"

Elisha instructed this woman to gather as many empty pots from their neighbors as they could and fill them with her little jar of oil. After she and her sons had obeyed, the oil continued to flow until every vessel was totally filled. She sold the oil to pay off her debts, and she and her sons lived off the rest.

In the Gospels (Matthew 14; Mark 6; Luke 9; John 6), Jesus and his disciples were faced with a hungry crowd of 5000 men. That number didn't even include women and children. He told the twelve to feed the crowd, but they said, "Hey, we've got 200 denarii, but **that's not enough** to buy food for all of these people, even if there was somewhere nearby to buy it!" So, He asked them, "Well, how many loaves *do* you have?" They counted five loaves and two fish, but Andrew said, "But, **what is that** among so many people?"

However, Jesus wasn't concerned with the small amount of available food, nor the lack of funds or availability of a convenient restaurant. Instead, He gave thanks for the little they had, and He blessed it. Then He split the loaves and fish, gave portions to the disciples, and commanded them to feed the people. Everyone present ate, not just one bite, but until they were *full*, and then the disciples collected twelve baskets of leftovers!

In 1 Kings 17, Elijah went to Zaraphath, where he found a widow who was collecting sticks to build a fire. She was planning to cook a

last meal for herself and her son. He asked her for food, to which she replied, “***I don’t have any bread***, just a handful of flour and a little oil. I was going to use it to cook our last meal before we die.”

Yet, Elijah asked her to bake *him* a loaf *first!* When she obeyed, that little bit of flour and oil continued to multiply, feeding all three of them for years!

When God tells us to put our hands to something, even if on the surface it seems small and insignificant, He takes our natural efforts and adds His supernatural to it.

Do Whatever He Says

These stories reveal times when God moved in a miraculous way, providing a mind-blowing miracle. Although He certainly *does* work this way at times, it is possible for us to miss the supernatural because we are only expecting the spectacular. Sometimes God will give us instructions to take actions that just seem too normal, so we dismiss them. Or, perhaps they aren’t necessarily difficult, but seem absolutely illogical!

Maybe His guidance just seems beyond our abilities, or too hard, or might offend someone. However, when God gives you instruction to do something natural: just do it! By listening, believing, and obeying, God can add His super to your natural, and you can see supernatural results!

At the wedding in Cana, John 2:7-8 says, “*Jesus said to them, ‘Fill the waterpots with water...Draw some out now, and take it to the master of the feast.’ And they took it.*” The servants literally dished out *water* to serve to the master of the feast! Yet, he told the Bridegroom, “*You have kept the good wine until now!*”

In Luke 5, Jesus commandeered Peter’s boat. He said, “*Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.*” Peter

responded, “*At Your word I will let down the net*”. After Peter obeyed (albeit only halfway, since he only cast out one “net”), they caught so many fish, two boats began to sink!

One day, the conversation turned to whether paying taxes was right or wrong. Jesus told Peter to cast a hook into the sea and whichever fish he caught first would have a coin in its mouth to pay their taxes (Matthew 17:27). He gave Peter direction that, after Peter obeyed, brought provision.

When you are willing and believe God enough to obey His instructions, no matter how ridiculous they may seem, the results can be amazing!

Obedience Is Worth It

Consider each of these stories and the actions that the Lord instructed people to take. Sometimes when God tells us to do something, His instructions seem illogical, senseless, or even potentially downright embarrassing!

However, at the wedding in Cana, Mary (Jesus’ mother) told the servants, “*Whatever He says to you, do it.*” There is so much wisdom packed in that tiny verse! It’s very simple, yet when put into action can have absolutely supernatural results.

What if the servants at the wedding in Cana had laughed in Jesus’ face? How many of us would have the confidence, the boldness—the faith—to serve what we thought was *water* to the man in charge? The servants did a “crazy” thing, but it turned out to be a wonderful boon for the groom, who was likely their master. (It makes one wonder if those servants were paid a bonus or got a promotion—for nothing but faith and obedience to Jesus!)

What if the widow and her sons had only collected a few empty vessels? It’s almost certain their neighbors thought they were a bit

crazy, knowing they had nothing! What if they had allowed the opinions of others to affect their level of obedience? Would there have been enough to pay off all of the debt? Maybe only one son would have been sold into slavery. Would the boys have escaped slavery, but not had enough to live off of?

Imagine if Peter had been all-in and thrown as many nets as he could into the water when Jesus told him to. But the instruction seemed an insane waste of time: they had been fishing all night and had caught nothing, and now the sun was out—fish can't be caught during the day! And Peter had just finished washing his nets—it would have been so inconvenient to cast all of them and then have to wash them again. Yet, if he had disregarded all of the natural wisdom and inconvenience, and fully obeyed Jesus, imagine the increase he and his partners would have seen!

When He sent him to go fish for taxes, Jesus didn't just snap His fingers and cause a coin to appear for Peter. He had to go fishing—for one fish! However, he decided, "I'll just do it!" Do you think perhaps this could have been preparing Peter for the faith that enabled even his shadow to bring healing to those who were hurting?

God Blesses Diligence

When it comes to God's blessings, we need to be active, prepared, and expectant. My wife, Carlie, has a great story about this from our Bible college days. I'll let her tell it in her own words:

At this time in our life, it was frequently feast and famine. With Ashley buying and selling cars to support the family, we often had our money tied up in vehicles. I knew when Ashley told me, "Don't go shopping this week. Go easy on the groceries," that we were in a tight spot.

One day, I was getting frustrated. I'm in the kitchen, washing dishes, and washing dishes while frustrated is a noisy business. I was complaining to God, much like the Israelites, and asking Him if He brought us here to die.

Diligent, I wasn't.

"What is the problem, Lord? I know the blessing that you've spoken over us, but what on earth is stopping this financial blessing from being released?" And I'll never forget God's response, "You've forgotten that you're blessed. You've got to put your hand to something."

That's when it hit me. If I really was expecting to receive an abundance, I needed to be prepared for it. In James 2, we read that faith without works, i.e. corresponding action, is dead. So, if you really believe something, you're going to do something that shows what you believe.

It was at that moment I looked over at our kitchen table. Whenever we sold a car, this is where the buyer would sit with us to fill out the paperwork. But it was stacked with coloring books, the kids' homework, lunchboxes, glue, glitter, on and on. It was chaos central all over that table. I saw that and it finally registered.

"You're right, Lord!" If I really believed my family had been blessed, I would clear off the table, clean the kitchen, and prepare for Ashley to walk through the door with a buyer.

My act of diligence, of faith, in that moment might have seemed insignificant, but I'm telling you, by cleaning off that table I had set my hand to something. This was me preparing my fields for rain.

It wasn't a long time after that the phone started ringing, people started showing up, and we sold three cars in one

day! But it all began with taking God at His word and performing an act of diligence and faith.

God Blesses the Work

So many times in Scripture, we read how God always followed a natural work with a supernatural blessing. Like the examples where in Cana, they filled the cisterns with water and Jesus turned it to wine. Or, when Jesus fed the 5,000, it started by gathering up only a few loaves and fishes. Then the increase came until it was overflowing. Or, when Peter paid his tax bill by going fishing and finding a coin in the mouth of the fish. There is nearly always natural action before the supernatural increase.

One thing I always found fascinating about all these stories is that God always started with something they already possessed. He didn't ask them to do something completely unrelated. He starts with what you have.

When we're talking about the work of your hands, it could be many things. It could be your job, your role as a parent, your focus as a student. It could be running a small business, working at a ministry, taking care of your elderly parents. It's being diligent in whatever you are doing, day to day. It's being faithful at everything you do.

Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.

Genesis 2:15

God's original plan for mankind was to work. To be creative. To put his hands to something. This was before the fall, before Adam and Eve disobeyed God. Even in that perfect Eden existence, Adam had a job. He had a job even before he had a wife.

Labor Before Your Blessing

A pastor I know always tells the couples he's counseling premarriage that they must be out of debt before they marry. And they need to save up around \$10,000. Otherwise, he won't marry them.

Talk about motivation.

These young couples suddenly find the diligence and faithfulness to get themselves out of debt and beginning to establish a nest egg. When they are faced with the proper motivation, that \$10,000 comes in no time!

It's wise counsel because financial stress is one of the top causes for broken marriages. My pastor friend is giving those couples a firm, financial foundation before embarking on their new life together. But he's doing even more for them than that. He's helping them learn how to be diligent, faithful, and expectant for the blessing it brings.

Overcoming the Thorns

Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life."

Genesis 3:17

Adam's disobedience brought pain, toil, and striving. Work, which had previously been a joy, a gift, a blessing, was now a curse. All the work he previously did, which had been a delight, would now become laborious. The ground would be cursed under his hands and deprive him of easy fruitfulness.

Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return.

Genesis 3:18-19

Not only would the work be hard and agonizing, but among the fruits and vegetables would now grow thorns and thistles.

Gone was the joy of work. Now it was painful. It would leave Adam exhausted, drained, and oftentimes even bloody. Does that feel familiar? Do you feel like the ground you're working is cursed? That the month is longer than your paycheck? That your business can't get ahead and everything you're doing never seems to work?

Haggai 1:6 describes it this way:

You have sown much, and bring in little; You eat, but do not have enough; You drink, but you are not filled with drink; You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; And he who earns wages, earns wages to put into a bag with holes.

Basically, you do everything you can and it's never enough. You follow man's wisdom, even God's wisdom of diligence, yet without faith in His promise, so no matter what you do, you're barely getting by. You live paycheck to paycheck.

Proverbs 23:5 says this about money: *"For riches certainly make themselves wings; They fly away like an eagle toward heaven."* Oftentimes, it can feel exactly like our riches grow wings and fly away.

But that's not the end of the story.

Remember, in Galatians 3:13, we read that Jesus redeemed us from the curse. We've already been redeemed from this fruitless toil. What Jesus did is illustrated perfectly in Matthew.

When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand...

Matthew 27:29

Jesus sweat blood in Gethsemane as He awaited the time of His crucifixion. His brow wasn't covered in sweat, but in His blood. He bore the curse of toil by the sweat of our brow by sweating blood from His own.

Then before they nailed Him to the cross, those thorns were smashed down until they pierced His head, and blood ran down His forehead again. Those thorns were taken from the ground. That same ground previously cursed due to Adam's actions. Now, through the shed blood of the Savior of the world, that curse was broken, and the work of our hands redeemed.

The Fruitfulness of Labor

As children of God, who now live under the redemption of Jesus' sacrifice, our work is once again blessed. It is no longer cursed. Jesus changed everything. Our work is supposed to be fruitful. There's a blessing over us and we can place a demand on that blessing.

The Lord will open to you His good treasure, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season, and to bless all the work of your hand. You shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow.

Deuteronomy 8:12

You shall surely give to him, and your heart should not be grieved when you give to him, because for this thing the LORD your God will bless you in all your works and in all to which you put your hand.

Deuteronomy 15:10

The LORD will open the heavens, the storehouse of His bounty, to send rain on your land in season and to bless all the work of your hands.

Deuteronomy 28:12

All we need to do is believe the Word of God that whatever we put our hands to will be blessed. To do this, we need to be speaking words of life over our workplace, over our business, over everything we do. You can say, “Lord, I thank You. All the works of my hands are blessed. Whatever I do prospers.”

Speak these words of life out and silence the words of defeat.

Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.

Proverbs 18:21

If you find yourself often saying things like, “I never get ahead. I’m always overlooked for promotion. Whatever I do, it never seems to work out. I’ve tried everything. It just seems the money goes and nothing I do prospers,” those are the results you will see.

The power of life and death are in your tongue. Choose to speak life.

Speak Blessings Over Your Life

So many are living far below the standard God has designed for us because they're cursing the labor of their hands. Frequently, it's not other people or even the devil working against us. It's us. We become our own worst enemy.

Jesus, however, gave us a different example. When He performed the miracle that fed the 5,000, He didn't talk about it not being enough. He didn't outline all the ways the food would never stretch far enough to feed everyone. He took what He was given and simply blessed it.

If you will do this, bless the works of your hands, everything will change for you. Speak out the blessings you can find in Scripture, like Deuteronomy 28:8, "The Lord will command the blessing on me in my storehouses and in all to which I set my hand." That means your savings accounts and all of your work. You could also speak over your life Deuteronomy 30:9, "The Lord my God will make me abound in all the work of my hand."

Psalm 1:3 says, "whatever he does will prosper." Do you believe that? You need to start believing it. You need to get this on the inside of you. Proverbs 13:4 says, "*The soul of the diligent shall be made rich.*" When you're diligent, labor unto the Lord, and don't give up, you're going to see your work prosper.

And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

Colossians 3:17

This is how we should labor. Work in a way that blesses your boss and your workplace. Thank God for the opportunities to labor each and every day. See work as a blessing, not a curse. Even when it's not enough in the natural, thank the Lord. Tell Him, "In Your

hands, this is more than enough. For You can make the diligent soul rich. Praise God, I can see that come through in my life.”

Believe God’s Word. Obey Him. Work diligently as unto the Lord. Speak the blessing in the Word of God over the work of your hands. If you follow these practical steps of faith, you’ll see the results of God wanting you rich.

CHAPTER SEVEN

FAITH-FILLED GIVING

GOD HAS ALREADY MOVED to provide for us. We've believed His Word and His promises, and we have begun to diligently set our hands to something, knowing that He blesses the work of our hands.

Now we move into the second faith response to receive God's financial blessing in our lives.

There is one who scatters, yet increases more; And there is one who withholds more than is right, but it leads to poverty.

The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself.

Proverbs 11:24-25

One translation of this verse describes it as "one who gives." The one who gives will see increase, while the one who withholds more than they should will experience poverty. If you do not have enough, the Scripture says it's because you're not giving enough.

You may not feel like you have anything to give. And that may be true. We'll remain in lack when we do not scatter the seed we have. We're meant to scatter seed so that seed can reproduce.

In 2 Corinthians 9:10, Scripture tells us that the Lord provides seed to the sower and increases the seed that you sow. If you're withholding, you aren't sowing. This will only lead to poverty.

We are called to be generous, to imitate our Father who has a generous spirit. His very nature is to give.

New Kingdom, New Principles

Remember, with God, we do things differently. We live and work with different principles in the Kingdom of God, and that includes how we approach our finances. If we want to get ahead in the Kingdom of God, not only do we have to work diligently, we also have to give.

The natural world will tell you, “If you’re short of money, you can’t afford to give.” On the contrary, the principles of the Kingdom of God say, “You can’t afford *not* to give.”

When Carlie and I stepped out into full-time ministry, we both left management positions in a larger ministry. We didn’t have a lot of resources, but we had a word from God that this was what He wanted us to do. So, in faith, we did it.

Now, we were starting our full-time ministry, and we didn’t have any money coming in. We had no salary. As we were praying about what to do with our giving, neither of us felt good about reducing what we had been giving. Even though our circumstances and budget had changed, we didn’t want to cut back on our giving. It didn’t feel right. In fact, we felt God was calling us to even increase our giving. To give more than ever.

So, we actually *quadrupled* our giving. It didn’t make any sense in the natural, but it made sense in God’s Kingdom. It was like God was saying, “Hey, kids, cast out your nets!”

Learning our lesson from Peter, when he only cast out one net rather than all the nets he had, we obeyed in faith. We believed His promises, so even though it came with a little bit of a flesh freak-out, we did it. Within a relatively short time, God not only met our prior income, He surpassed it!

Stretching Our Tent

Giving is an act of faith. It's going to take faith to give. It's going to take belief in the power of God to gain access to the Kingdom of God. You'll have to choose between doing things the world's way or doing things God's way. And God's way is abundance, increase, excess, and always more than enough. He wants to increase you. He wants to enlarge the place of your tent.

Enlarge the place of your tent, and let them stretch out the curtains of your dwellings; Do not spare; Lengthen your cords, and strengthen your stakes. For you shall expand to the right and to the left, and your descendants will inherit the nations, and make the desolate cities inhabited.

Isaiah 54:2-3

When we give, we're trusting God. We're stretching ourselves in the area of faith, like stretching out the pegs on a tent and fastening the stakes down. You're enlarging the capacity of your tent to receive.

That might be what giving feels like to you, too. Like you're being stretched. Like you're stretching your budget. What you are stretching is your faith! It may not make sense, but you're enlarging your capacity to receive the blessings of God.

You'll never outgive God. He will always be the bigger giver. If you're waiting to give until you have extra, you may never have extra. If you don't give from what you have now, should you ever have extra, you still won't have the heart to give.

Accepting that Jesus has already purchased prosperity for you, on the cross 2,000 years ago, doesn't force God to provide for you. It doesn't move God's heart, but it does move yours. It takes you from a place of not knowing if God wants you blessed, not knowing if He

will really provide for you, and positions your heart to receive it. You realize, “Wait. Jesus already provided for me. That means what I have is already His anyway. I don’t have to hold on so tightly to what I have. He is more than enough!”

If we look back to when the Israelites gave toward the building of the temple, their hearts are revealed in Scripture. David praised the Lord, and said:

Both riches and honor come from You, and You reign over all... Now therefore, our God, we thank You and praise Your glorious name. But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly as this? For all things come from You, and of Your own we have given You.

1 Chronicles 29:12-14

David continued to praise the Lord by saying:

As for me, in the uprightness of my heart I have willingly offered all these things; and now with joy I have seen Your people, who are present here to offer willingly to you.

1 Chronicles 29:17

The heart the children of Israel had for God was revealed in their willingness to give to Him. And they didn’t give just a little! Remember, they gave \$217 *billion* toward the building of the temple. “*Because with a loyal heart they had offered willingly to the LORD*” (1 Chronicles 29:9).

When building the temple, the Israelites had a loyal heart for God, and they gave willingly, realizing that the incredible wealth they

had was because He had given it to them. When we give to the Lord, we are expressing our gratitude for His blessing, our love for Him, and our trust in His Word that declares He will continuously provide us seed to sow and bread for food.

The Seed Giver

Giving should be our number-one priority in our finances. We give God the firstfruits from our budget. Like we're instructed in Matthew 6:33, we seek first the Kingdom of God and then all these things will be added.

When we get serious about our giving, God gets serious about our getting. He supplies seed to the sower.

Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness.

2 Corinthians 9:10

This teaches us that not only is God going to increase the seed we sow, He's going to provide the seed in the first place. He provides seed to the giver. When you determine in your heart to be a giver, God will give you seed.

If you want to give, God will give you something to give. Even if it's only a dollar. Even if it feels too small. It doesn't matter. Don't forget the lesson of the one hundredfold. \$1 does not equal \$1. It can have an infinite return, with fruit that yields year after year.

You can be a generous giver no matter what financial state you are living in. God not only provides the seed, He also gives bread to the eater. He's providing for your needs, for food, for income, for you to sustain yourself, while only a portion is to be sown.

If we eat our seed instead of sowing it, we're going to get hungry again. Take the feeding of the 5,000. The boy brought his lunch—loaves and fish—to Jesus. That was seed he planted, from seed the Lord had provided him. The disciples were no doubt hungry, too. They could have taken it, split it among themselves, and eaten it. Instead, they recognized this was not the harvest, this was the seed. So, it was given to Jesus, and Jesus multiplied it.

That's what seed was designed to do, even in the natural world: multiply. You take seeds, plant them, water them, and they grow and produce a harvest. Seeds were designed to grow.

Take, for example, an apple. I can take an apple and eat it, even the seeds, and I've given myself one meal. Or I can plant just one of the apple seeds, and eventually, an apple tree will spring forth. From that tree, I'll reap a harvest of many more apples. If I chose to plant all of the seeds, think of the eventual harvest!

That's what the hundredfold return is. It keeps giving.

If you're struggling with this idea, I want to help change your mindset on this today. So, here's the hard truth. If you don't have enough, it's because you are considering your seed as your harvest. That seed was meant to be sown. And it's going to take faith to do that.

When we receive all we need plus more, we're equipped to give far beyond what would have been possible in our lack. This blesses us twice because we're able to partake in the joy of giving.

Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.

Ephesians 4:28

Here, the Apostle Paul, the author of grace, is saying we work so we can give. God gives us the power to obtain wealth so we can provide for others. Make that the number-one item on your budget. Yes, you must pay your rent, your bills, and buy food, but the number-one thing in your budget should be giving.

In all my years in ministry, I've never had anyone approach me after losing their income with a fear they wouldn't know how to give. I've had people want prayer for paying their bills, buying food, covering their mortgage, but not usually for their giving. When we place giving as the number-one priority in our budget—when we “seek first the Kingdom of God”—all these things are added. When we get serious about our giving, God can get serious about our getting.

Start dreaming and planning for your giving. Tell God how much you'd love to bless a ministry or church each week with a tithe. Start thinking like that. Write out a faith check and hold on to it. When you start thinking like that, things change.

Get addicted to giving, and God will supply your habit.

How to Give Cheerfully

Many want to be cheerful, generous givers, but they don't know how. How do you get there? How do you give without worrying you won't have enough? How do you hand over what you need without anxiety?

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

In this verse, the Apostle Paul is telling us who determines the size of your harvest. It's you! You can sow sparingly and reap sparingly, or you can sow bountifully and reap bountifully.

What does bountiful sowing look like? Scripture gives us an example in Mark 12. Here we find Jesus sitting opposite the treasury, watching the people put in money.

Now, to get a full image of what this was like, imagine your pastor sitting there watching you give your offering. I've seen this done. I used to attend a church where the pastor stood on the stage watching the people place money in the offering box. One day, he even challenged one of the congregants when they made their offering.

"Come on, Bob," he said. "You can do better than that." And Bob could. He went back and dropped in another twenty.

That's what Jesus was doing. He was watching the congregants and their offerings. Many of them were rich. But then, a widow woman came and dropped in two mites. That's the equivalent value of roughly a dollar, or dollar and a half. She literally gave her last coin.

When Jesus saw this, He called His disciples over for a teaching moment. He said, *"Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all; for all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God, but she out of her poverty put in all the livelihood that she had"* (Luke 21:3-4).

To Jesus, these gifts had nothing to do with their numerical value. The rich gave much, and she gave little. Jesus didn't value the amount; He valued her heart.

Poor and Generous

God has set up the system of giving in such a way that every person can be a generous giver, even the poor. In fact, if you hardly have anything, being a generous giver is actually easier. For the wealthy, true generosity from the heart requires giving far more. For those with less, less is required.

Many feel that the poor are not expected to be generous givers, but Scripture doesn't say Jesus chased down the widow woman to give her two mites back. He didn't tell her, "You don't need to give to the treasury. You're poor." No, Jesus knew the best place for that widow's money was in the treasury, investing in the Gospel and sowing seed for her increase.

I can't wait to get to Heaven so I can hear the widow woman's story about how she prospered. I know she did because I know the Word of God works. If we want to reap bountifully, we will sow bountifully.

The Hilarious Giver

How do you know you're giving bountifully? In 2 Corinthians 9:7, it says to "*let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity.*" It's your choice. He's leaving it up to you. If you want to sow bountifully, you can. And you'll reap bountifully.

The seventh verse continues, "*for God loves a cheerful giver.*" The word "cheerful" comes from the Greek word *hilaros*, which is where we get the word "hilarious." So, God loves a hilarious giver!

If you study this out, it can even be translated as a "hilarious giver to the point of craziness." In other words, a hysterical giving. Not out of panic but out of an almost crazy expectation.

God loves when His servants understand His promises and put a demand on them. If you're a cheerful giver, it's because you know when you sow that you're also going to reap. You know that when

you scatter, you're going to increase. You understand these spiritual truths, and that's what makes you a cheerful giver.

When Your Flesh Freaks Out

One indicator of being a generous giver might be when you give an amount that makes your flesh freak out. If you start giving and God places an amount on your heart, you know you've reached the "generous" level when you feel like it's going to kill you. That's generous.

I've been there. I've asked God before, "Lord, how much should I give?" Then He told me the amount and my response was, "Whoa, God, are you sure?" Many times, it's been all I've had. My hand has literally shaken as I wrote the check. Then I put it in the bucket and watch the bucket go.

I've gone to sleep at night asking myself, "Did I really give that amount of money?" Then I've woken up the next morning and asked myself again, "Seriously. Did I?" At that point, I'm not believing for a harvest. I'd just be happy with a refund. It's a good thing God's promises are more secure than our flesh!

However, when your flesh freaks out on you like that, you know you've just given a generous gift.

Get God's Attention

Another way to look at it is this: if your giving isn't getting your attention, it's probably not getting God's either.

God is looking for cheerful givers. He's looking for His servants who will trust Him. It isn't about the actual money. God doesn't need it. His streets are made of gold and He owns the cattle on a thousand hills. He doesn't need your cash. What He wants is your trust and your love.

Scripture says, *“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”* (Matthew 6:21). Whatever we value, whatever we love, we will give toward. Look at your life. Where does your money go? Wherever it goes, that’s what you value. That’s what you love. You’re investing in it.

If you love the Lord and the Kingdom of God, you’ll want to give toward it. You’ll want to invest in it.

Here’s a harsh statement, but you may need to hear it. If you say you love the Lord and don’t give financially, I would question that love. Whatever you truly love, you give toward. Because it’s your passion. It’s where your heart is.

And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.

2 Corinthians 9:8

When we give, this is God’s scandalous response. He makes *all grace* abound toward us so that we have sufficiency and abundance for *every* good work. As a result of our hearts trusting Him with financial substance, God releases the power of abundance into our lives.

At the end of the day, we have to ask ourselves: if we can’t trust God with money, which is the least of things, how can we trust God for things far more important? Luke 16:11 puts it like this: *“If you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?”*

It’s for Your Own Good

Do you remember your parents ever teaching you a lesson, maybe even a painful one, followed by the ever-comfortgiving phrase, “This

is for your own good!” Well...that’s what I’ve been doing. My heart in writing this book is to *help* you. I want you to experience all of God’s promises—the full blessing of the Gospel of Jesus!

This is for your own good!

However, there are some who accuse those of us who teach this principle of giving and receiving. They say we are trying to manipulate others to give for our own selfish gain. If you have any suspicion that this is my goal, please don’t donate to my ministry! Find another organization that supports the mission of spreading the Gospel and plant your seed there, instead. If you ever give because you feel compelled, forced, or manipulated, do not submit to it!

I touched on this verse earlier, but let’s look more closely at it.

So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.

2 Corinthians 9:7

Giving grudgingly means you don’t really want to. Maybe you’re giving because, “Well, I *do* believe that if I give, I’ll receive, so I guess I have to do it. But I really could use this money...” It could also mean that someone has made you feel like you are less of a Christian if you don’t give. You know people are watching, therefore you drop money in the bucket, even if you don’t want to.

Giving grudgingly will not produce a quality harvest because the gift is not of faith, it’s of force. God doesn’t force you to love Him. He doesn’t force you to receive Jesus as your Savior. God can’t force healing on your body. And He definitely can’t force you to receive the blessing that comes from giving. If you are giving grudgingly, please, keep your money!

Another improper motivation for giving is out “of necessity.” Necessity means that you are giving because you have been

presented with a need and are guilted into giving toward it. This Greek word is *anagké*, and it means a compelling need requiring immediate action, as in a pressing situation. It calls for timely help, or strong force needed to accomplish something compulsory, a requirement.

This is what has happened to sour many people on the so-called “prosperity gospel.” Perhaps you’ve heard a minister say, “If you don’t give, these children are going to starve to death!” Or, “If you don’t give right now, our ministry will go under!” Or, “If you need healing, send me \$500 and you’ll be healed!” This type of thing is manipulation. It is evil. Do not ever give in response to someone trying to manipulate you!

However, like I said, I’m teaching you the right way to give for your own good!

The church at Philippi were faithful supporters of Paul’s ministry. He wrote to them:

Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities. Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account. Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God.

Philippians 4:15-18

Paul described the financial partnership the Philippian church had with his ministry as a sacrificial offering that was pleasing to God. But notice that Paul wasn’t grateful for their support because it

helped him. Nor did he appeal to them to give more because he needed it.

Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account.

Philippians 4:17

Paul pointed out that when the Philippian church gave, He was grateful because he knew their seed would result in an *abundance in their own accounts*.

I don't teach these principles to try to pad the lining of my own pocket. In fact, Carlie and I don't get paid any extra if more money is raised by our ministry. Our salary is an amount set by our Board of Directors, and it doesn't change based on how ministry income fluctuates. Even royalties from our book sales go directly back into the ministry accounts. We never want to give the impression that we are teaching these biblical, Kingdom principles to somehow increase personally.

God is our provider. Not you, not our ministry. And I want you to experience Him as your provider as well! The truth is that part of receiving His provision is to give in faith. It is a spiritual principle that works, no matter who you are. The only caveat is that your giving must be motivated by faith in and love for God.

Directly following Paul's declaration that the Philippian's gifts were pleasing to God as a sacrifice to Him, he continued with a very famous verse:

And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:19

Paul was confident in writing this promise to them because of their heart to give unto the Lord. They were givers. We shouldn't take this verse out of context. That promise followed faithful, financial giving!

God wants to give seed to those who want to sow. But we have to allow it. God isn't looking down deciding He'll give to this one and not that one. When we sow, we're activating a spiritual truth.

Everything is in seed form. Even Jesus Himself was planted as a seed to reap a harvest of humanity! Regarding financial blessing, it's in seed form. We need to sow that seed generously so we can see a generous harvest. Ask God what He wants you to sow. If the answer brings out a, "Whoa," like it often does me, that's probably God speaking to you.

Don't worry about your flesh. Our flesh can't understand the purpose of giving and receiving. Our flesh will just have to get over it.

Instead, seek to be a generous giver. Activate this spiritual truth. Sow your seed and watch what God gives back, shaken together, pressed down, and running over. Remember, He's the greatest giver. You can never outgive God.

When you give, trust Him. He will give back.

The scandalous truth is that when you give generously, cheerfully, from faith in and love for God, He *will* always provide for each and every one of your needs. And as you continue to believe, He will make all grace abound to you so that you always, having all sufficiency in all things, will be able to continue to give to every good work!

CONCLUSION

GOD WANTS YOU RICH. Yes, that truth is scandalous, and when you boldly share that truth with others, you will most likely experience some criticism. However, that doesn't change the fact that it is true!

It can be difficult for people to accept that God wants to provide for us and wants to bless us. That He is an extravagant God, with extravagant tastes that aren't meant to be confined to Heaven alone. It may be hard for people to realize that Jesus wasn't poor. He was blessed, right up to the day when He became cursed for us.

With all of these things, we all need to retrain our brains to stop thinking according to the natural rules of this fallen kingdom of the world and begin thinking and behaving according to the laws of the Kingdom of God. But that's why we have the Word of God. We can read and study the Word and begin to think, to pray, to believe, to act, to speak, and to live from God's perspective.

It's going to take relying on the Holy Spirit to show us when we are performing works of the flesh verses living by the grace of God through works of faith. It's not as difficult as you might expect, especially when you are leaning on and trusting in the work that Jesus has already done for you. All you need to do is believe!

Your faith will result in two specific responses: diligence and giving. Allow the Holy Spirit to empower you receive every blessing God has provided to you!

For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

Philippians 2:13

God's good pleasure, His desire, is that you prosper and be in health, even as your soul prospers (3 John 2). Trust in Him that He is working in you right now, enabling you to believe, work, give, and receive every promise He has given you!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ASHLEY TERRADEZ, president and founder of Terradez Ministries, is an international speaker, author and ministry leader. His humor and practical down-to-earth teaching communicate biblical principles in an accessible manner. Ashley is an expert in the biblical principles of finances and passionately teaches people the invaluable skill of making money God's way.

To access hours of free teaching materials, testimonies, articles, and more, please visit

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