

Growth In Giving Means Church Growth

Exodus 35:1-36:5

In Exodus 35 & 36, we read about the construction of the Tabernacle. The details of that construction are laid out in these two chapters.

It is conservatively estimated that the Tabernacle would cost approximately ten million dollars if it were constructed in the US today. The construction of the tabernacle required some generous giving on the part of God's people.

Last week, we looked to *2 Corinthians chapter 9*, and focused on how growth in the discipline of giving results in our personal growth as believers.

Today, I would like for us to consider what we are told in these chapters in Exodus about the giving that made the construction and ministry of the Tabernacle possible.

I am convinced that just as the construction and ministry of the Tabernacle would not have been possible had it not been for the people's willingness to grow in giving...growth in our church will not be possible without you and I being willing to grow in our practice of the discipline of giving.

What lessons can we learn from the building of the Tabernacle in Moses' day that we can apply to the growth of our church today?

1. The need was God caused - 35:4-5a; 29

It was nothing but the leadership, will, and desire of God in behalf of his people that presented the need for the Tabernacle.

He, who led His people out of slavery, gave them title right to the Promised Land, and miraculously opened up the Red Sea, now desired to have a place where He would meet with his people.

Thus, the need for the Tabernacle, which would be both a symbol of the presence of God in their midst and the place where man could meet God.

The Tabernacle, priesthood, offerings, and system of worship were to present a glorious preview and preparation for the coming of the Lamb of God, who would take away the sin of the world.

The Tabernacle had to be to the last detail exactly what God commanded.

Just as God commanded the building of the tabernacle, He has commanded that His church grow through making disciples. Church growth is God's idea.

"I will build my church" - **Matthew 16:16** (NIV)

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

- **Matthew 28:19-20** (NIV)

It is because of our Lord's command to make disciples that our church does all it does by way of worship, fellowship, discipleship, ministry, and evangelism.

It is because of our Lord's command to make disciples that we provide resources for Bible study, for teaching, for leadership training, for fellowship events, for music ministry, for prayer, for outreach, and missions.

It is because of our Lord's command to make disciples that we provide ministry opportunities for adults and children.

How is all this made possible?

It is made possible by all those who obey the instruction of God concerning giving to the support of his work through the life of this church!

According to one study of giving trends in the church, 16% of member households in the typical church give 80% of the budget receipts each year. 49% of member households give the other 20%, and 35% of member households give nothing.

"On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income." - **1 Corinthians 16:2a** (NIV)

Each of us should give to the support of our church's ministry because the work of the church and the need for its support is God caused.

It has been said that the votes that really count in a church are the votes that people cast with their feet and their dollars.

Since this is true, this means that to not give to support the work of my church is to vote to not see our church do the ministry necessary to make disciples.

To not give is to vote for our church not to grow.

To not give is to vote for our church not to survive.

To not give is to disobey God.

2. The potential was God arranged - 11:2; 12:35-36

That which God called the people to give, He had already provided. Their obedience to God with respect to His provision made possible their obedience with respect to the project God had set before them.

You see, when we speak today of giving, we are talking about more than what you put in the envelope or in the offering plate.

We are also talking about how we use all that God gives us.

You see, God gives to us, not so we can give to ourselves, but so that we might give to others as we support his work through our church.

“If you are a thief, quit stealing. Instead, use your hands for good hard work, and then give generously to others in need.” - Ephesians 4:28 (NLT)

Paul tells us that to be able to give, we must be willing to be productive.

To be able to obey God in the amount we give, we must obey God in the amount we receive.

Some of you today are having trouble obeying God in the area of giving because you are not obeying God in the area of productivity or stewardship.

God has arranged for each of us to give what He commands by giving us adequate supply.

The problem is that too many of us do not want to rearrange our life styles in order to follow Him to the livelihood He has planned for us; or we are unwilling to rearrange our lives in order to live within the boundaries of the provision God gives to us.

God has a plan for the life of each of His children.

“He creates each of us by Christ Jesus to join him in the work he does, the good work he has gotten ready for us to do, work we had better be doing.” - Ephesians 2:10 (The Message)

To participate in God’s plan for us with respect to giving, we must submit to His plan with respect to our living.

A. How we make it.

Part of God's plan for our lives includes our doing with our lives that which God has planned for us to do in order to provide for our need and our seed.

But as Paul points out, finding the thing God wants me to do for my livelihood will require a willingness to work - by way of preparation and by way of performance - which is why too many of God's people are not enjoying the living God has planned for them.

A Union Representative was explaining the new Work Contract. He said, "I have great news. Management has agreed to lighten our work schedule!" The crowd shouted, "Hooray!" "And we will have a 150% pay rise." "Hooray!" "We will finish work at 4 PM, not 5 PM." And again the crowd yelled, "Hooray!" "We will start work at 10 AM, not 9 AM." "Hooray!" "From now on, we will work only on Wednesdays." There was dead silence --- then a voice from the back asked, "EVERY Wednesday?"

"Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work." - Thomas Edison

God has a plan for your livelihood - prepare for it and pursue it - then, once you've entered into it - perform as though you are serving the Lord, because that is actually what you are doing.

"Do your work willingly, as though you were serving the Lord himself, and not just your earthly master. In fact, the Lord Christ is the one you are really serving, and you know that he will reward you." - **Colossians 3:23-24** (CEV)

B. How we use it.

"About nine out of every ten people with an income are financial failures." - George Bowman in *How to Succeed in Money*

Bowman means that they fail to manage money wisely.

Seven Principles of Finance for the Believer By Jim and Pam Elliff

One of the most recognizable differences in the believer and the world he lives in is his unusual relationship to money and possessions.

However, even serious believers sometimes balk at the seeming extremities in the teaching and lifestyle of Christ and the leaders of the New Testament church.

Can we duplicate this New Testament lifestyle in our day?

This outline provides the diligent believer with some key principles preparing him/her for radical, other-worldly financial behavior.

Take some time alone (or if you are married, with your spouse) for reading the Scripture texts and thinking about the obedient response in each area. Then write out what you find.

There is only one thing for you to do after this meditation: obey!

Consider these seven principles of finance for the believer, taken from a pamphlet by the same name written by Jim and Pam Elliff:

1. The Principle of Non-Attachment

I will purchase or receive nothing that I cannot give away.

And He said to them, "Beware and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions" (**Luke 12:15**).

(Also see **Luke 12:32-34**; **16:13-25**; **1 John 2:15-17**)

What must I do to obey these verses?

2. I will owe no man anything but to love him.

Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law (**Romans 13:8**).

(Also see **Proverbs 22:7**)

What must I do to obey these verses?

3. The Principle of Liberality

I will constantly seek to give away possessions for God's glory.

For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability they gave of their own accord, begging us with much entreaty for the favor of participation in the support of the saints, and this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God (**2 Corinthians 8:3-5**).

(Also see **2 Corinthians 9:7; Luke 6:38**)

What must I do to obey these verses?

4. The Principle of Recall

I will keep accurate records of God's dealings with me

financially in order to show others that God answers prayer and provides for His own.

Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven (**Matthew 5:16**).

(Also see **Proverbs 27:23-27**)

What must I do to obey these verses?

5. The Principle of Security

I will save and invest only if God is leading, with the understanding that I will give it all away at His slightest instruction.

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But lay up your treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in or steal (**Matthew 6:19-20**).

(Also see **Proverbs 28:8; 1 Timothy 6:9-11**)

What must I do to obey these verses?

6. The Principle of Compassion

I will not pray for someone else's needs financially unless I am willing to be the instrument God uses to meet that need if He should desire.

We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his

heart against him how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth (**1 John 3:16-18**).

(Also see **James 2:15-17; Luke 6:30, 38; 2 Corinthians 9:6-15; Proverbs 28:27**).

What must I do to obey these verses?

7. The Principle of Contentment

I will be content to live on whatever God chooses to provide, whether little or much.

Not that I speak from want; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I

also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me (**Philippians 4:11-13**).

(Also see **Proverbs 30:7-9**; **Matthew 6:24-34**; 1 Timothy 6:8; **Hebrews 13:5**)

What must I do to obey these verses?

Some of you need to deal with debt.

The late Larry Burkett, a Christian financial counselor & founder of Crown Ministries, gives these statistics. 40% borrow more than they can make monthly payments on.

The average American family is always only 3 weeks away from bankruptcy. According to Burkett and social security statistics, 85 out of 100 Americans have less than \$250 in cash saved up by age 65.

Why do we have such problems?

Is it because we're over generous?

The statistics would deny that as they tell us that the average American gives only 2% of their income to charitable institutions.

We have more resources at our disposal than any people in history, but somehow financial matters are a source of constant difficulty and stress.

What is truly sad is that what is true of the average American is also true of the typical Christian. How can we get out of debt?

1. Divide all your debts by the minimum monthly payment. List them all in order from the least number of payments to the largest.

2. Prayerfully determine the most money you can make available from your budget to apply to the debt snowball. The more you can apply, the faster you'll pay off your debt.

3. Each month, apply the minimum payment PLUS the extra money you've made available from your budget to the first debt. On all your other debts, pay only the minimum payment. Continue to do this until the first debt on the list is paid off.

4. Take the minimum payment AND the extra payment you were making on the first debt and add them to the minimum payment you've been paying on the second debt. Pay that amount on the second debt each month until it's paid off, then move on to the third debt. Continue to pay only the minimum payment on all debts except the one you're "snowballing."

5. Repeat this process until all of the debts are paid off.

Seek to obey God in the area of productivity or stewardship so that you might walk in the full financial potential he has planned for you to use to live and to give.

So, when it came to the tabernacle the need was God caused and the potential was God arranged

3. The offerings were God directed.

A. It was a free will offering - 35: 5b, 21-22, 29

B. It was a revelation offering - 35:4, 10

C. It was a God-ward offering - 35:5, 21-22, 29

D. It was a God-empowered offering - What God expects, He enables!

E. It was an inclusive offering - 35:4, 22

God directs each of us (all are included) to give freely as God reveals, to Him by faith.

It has been estimated that only 13% of church members practice tithing.

That means that 87% are not giving as God directs!

What a glorious thing it would be if every member would give as God directs, starting with giving a tithe of their income to support the church's ministry budget and then beyond that as the Lord reveals His will to them.

They gave that way in Moses' day, and consequently . . .

4. The results were God glorifying - 36:5

Not only did God's people give sufficiently, they gave a surplus! Oh, that we might experience such a move of God among us today!

The late Larry Burkett, a financial expert said, "If every Church member in America would increase their giving to an average of 10% (current estimates are that American Christians give less than 3%), there would be an extra \$69 billion for overseas missions and an additional \$150 billion in income for American churches."

You see, the funding is already here, it's called a "tithe." The biblical word for giving 10%.

Conclusion: There is an old joke about a preacher who got the people wound up during his sermon on the growth of the church. He shouted: "IF THIS CHURCH IS GOING TO SERVE GOD IT'S GOT TO GET DOWN ON ITS KNEES AND CRAWL!!!" And the audience yelled back "Make it crawl preacher, make it crawl!"

"AND ONCE THIS CHURCH HAS LEARNED TO CRAWL, IT'S GOT TO GET UP ON ITS FEET AND WALK!!!" "Make it walk preacher, make it walk" the audience moaned.

AND ONCE THIS CHURCH HAS LEARNED TO WALK ITS GOT BEGIN TO LEARN TO RUN!!!" "Make it run, preacher, make it run!"

"AND IN ORDER TO RUN, ITS GOT REACH DEEP DOWN INTO POCKETS AND LEARN TO GIVE!!!" (pause) "Let it crawl preacher, let it crawl."

A Church can't grow if it doesn't give. It will crawl.

A preacher stood before his church and said, "I've got some good news and some bad news. The good news is that the church has all the money it needs... The bad news is that it's all still in your wallets."

Earlier we mentioned that the votes in church that really count are the ones people cast with their feet and with their dollars. When it comes to giving to support the ministry and growth of our church, how are you voting?

I encourage you to take the insert of the Seven Principles of Finance for the Believer By Jim and Pam Elliff home meditate on them by yourself and with your spouse. See what God is calling you to contribute as a tithe to support the church's ministry budget and then beyond that as the Lord reveals His will to you.