

# How to Distribute True Wealth

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at Oak Grove Baptist Church, Paducah, Ky.  
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I Timothy 6:17-19

**Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. <sup>18</sup> Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, <sup>19</sup> storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.**

Readiness means preparation. We are all the time told and reminded and, yes, even goaded to prepare for emergencies. Storm preparedness is a good example. Public service announcements on television and radio tell us how to be prepared in case of a bad storm—you're to have flashlights with appropriate batteries, a battery operated radio, food and water for at least three to seven days, a first aid kit, and a secure location in case of a tornado. Those of us who live in the New Madrid Fault area should be prepared or ready in case a sizeable earthquake occurred.

The point is this—to be ready means you have to have a plan of action in place to be prepared for action. When the emergency occurs is not the time to stop planning.

Beyond emergency preparedness, our text tells us we are to be ready to give.

*“Ready to give, willing to share.”*

That is the focus of this message today.

*Readiness in giving* means preparation for giving must be made. We've learned that our generous God has given to us so we in turn can distribute to those in need and take the Gospel to the world, making disciples. We need a plan to be ready to do that and execute that plan.

Before I give you the plan the Bible gives us on how to distribute your wealth, I need to deal briefly with a wrong method that most of us have believed at one time or another. The method I am speaking of is the method of tithing.

## I. THE TITHING METHOD OF GIVING

I'm going to speak very briefly, not exhaustively, on this topic. If you want a more in-depth reason why I do not believe that tithing is commanded of a New Testament believer, I refer you to [realtruthmatters.com](http://realtruthmatters.com). There are two sermons I preached in 2010 entitled **The Truth About**

**Tithing, part one and part two.** You can listen to them as time permits, which will give you an exhaustive answer to why I do not believe tithing is the method of giving for the New Testament believer. But at this time let me just give you real quickly three things reasons.

### **A. The New Testament Never Commands Tithing**

As a support for New Testament tithing someone will refer to Jesus when He said to the Pharisees that they should have done some other things, like justice, mercy and faith, and not to leave their tithing undone,. But I don't believe that's proof for tithing because Jesus is dealing with the Old Covenant. The New Covenant had not come into existence because Christ had not yet died. Besides, none of the apostles ever speak on it. For example, when the apostles do speak about giving they never mention the word *tithing*. They speak of giving in a completely different way.

### **B. The Text is Only Addressed to the Rich**

If Paul were teaching on tithing as the way in which God funded His eternal enterprise on the earth, it seems to me that he would not confine his remarks on giving to the rich only, because in the Old Testament all landowners were to tithe. But he doesn't, he confines his remarks only to the wealthy, which means New Testament giving is beyond just a certain portion of your income. The more you have been blessed with the more obligated you are to give. That is completely contrary to the Old Testament. In the Old Testament you had this principle—if God gives you ten dollars, one belongs to Him.

Now, brothers and sisters, I hear New Testament preachers saying statements like that. *If God gives you ten dollars, take out one and you can keep the other nine and do whatever you want to do with it.* That is not New Testament, that's Old Testament and I'll get into that in just a moment.

### **C. The Tithe Was Not Single But Plural**

The tithe in the Old Testament was not single, that is 10 percent, but plural. There were four tithes in the Old Testament. The four different tithes totaled more than twenty percent of your income. So unless you've been giving more than twenty percent of your annual income, you haven't been tithing according to the Old Testament.

I want to be clear. If you tithe and give 10 percent of your income, which is what the word *tithe* means, I am not finding fault; I do not want you to misunderstand me and think I am saying you are unspiritual or that by doing so you're unbiblical. I would not say that. In fact, I would say the opposite. Most people who have committed to giving at least 10 percent of their income are usually very spiritual people, they want to obey the Lord. So I'm not reflecting in any way upon your spirituality because you give 10 percent of your income. What I'm asking you to do is think beyond 10 percent. As you will see in just a few moments, God has a different formula for New Covenant giving.

## II. THE CHRISTIAN METHOD OF GIVING

### A. Grace Giving

Grace giving is the New Covenant method. That's a term many have used to explain the kind of giving the New Testament teaches for the Christian and it's based upon 2 Corinthians 8:1-2,

*“Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia:”*

Paul is saying he wants them to know about a particular grace that God bestowed—grace giving.

*“that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality.”*

Then verse 6,

*“So we urged Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also complete this grace in you as well. But as you abound in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love for us—see that you abound in this grace also.”*

So there is, in the New Testament, a grace to give and Paul commands all believers to make sure, with all diligence that they abound in that grace as well.

Why do we call it grace giving? Because the entire Christian life is a life of grace. Everything you do is to be by the power of grace, and that's why, when a preacher stands up in front of a crowd and he says, “Here is ten dollars” and takes one of them and says, “this belongs to God and that's all God asks of you, He doesn't require anymore than that and the other nine is yours to spend however you want,” he contradicts the entire spirit of the New Testament. The entire spirit of the New Testament says I am purchased by the grace of God and the only way I can live this Christian life is by grace. Grace gives me the desire and the power to do the will of God. That means 10 percent doesn't belong to God, 100 percent belongs to Him.

Everything concerning my life belongs to Him and to say that only 10 percent does, is completely denying the efficacy of the blood of Jesus Christ. The same grace that is effective through the death of Christ in the paying for my sins is the same death that purchased me personally. In other words, Jesus didn't just pay for your sins, He paid for you. He owns you. He is King, He is Lord, He is Master, and therefore grace does not exempt giving.

Three years ago when I started teaching the principle that tithing wasn't a part of the New Testament system of giving for the believer, I think some of you rejoiced, kicked your heels and said, “We don't have to give, we're under grace.” Listen, grace does not and it cannot exempt giving, because giving is a grace. Just because you're not under the Old Testament law of the tithe

doesn't mean you're free to keep all of your resources and do whatever you want with it. You are to abound in the grace of giving.

## **B. The Plan For Grace Giving**

Here is how you should plan to give and therefore be ready to give. All good plans have at least three things: purpose, procedure, and performance.

### **I. The Purpose of Grace Giving**

What is the reason that you and I should give?

**We give to glorify God by demonstrating how generous He is.**

Our purpose for giving is to demonstrate how generously God gives to us. Jesus told a parable about a man who had an excessively large debt and went to the man who had loaned him the money and asked for more time and the man, simply out of the kindness of his heart, forgave him the entire debt. And then the man who had just been forgiven walked away and found a fellow employee who owed him a small amount. That man begged for mercy and forgiveness and the man wouldn't give it to him.

The whole point of that story was Jesus saying to us, if you have been shown amazing kindness and marvelous mercies you ought to be a giver of kindness and mercies. Therefore, the more I give, the more I show this world just how gracious and good and giving God is. That should be a motive for why I want to give. Jesus said it this way, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

Let's go back to our text, 1 Timothy 6:17-18,

*"Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works,"*

*"Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16)*

This is radical teaching by the Lord and I hope to unpack it more in just a few moments to show just how radical it was in the ears of the people that day. What God is saying is that through your financial generosity you demonstrate how good God is and He is glorified. The more God gives you the more you can give, which demonstrates even more.

This is what I believe with all my heart that this community needs to see from our church. They need to see true biblical Christianity and true biblical Christianity is not stingy, selfish, or greedy.

But when professing Christians are as stingy, selfish and greedy as is the world, lost people make certain decisions about our God and our faith leaving them the conclusion that there is really nothing different about us.

But when they see your generosity, when they see your love for them, they say, “Why are you doing this? Man, I cussed you out last week, why are you being so kind and merciful to me?” Well then, the door is open for you to say, “Oh, let me tell you, God has been so gracious and generous to me. He forgave me of all of my sins because Jesus died for them.” You now have an open door to share the Gospel. It glorifies God. More about this in just a few moments.

### **We Give Because We Want to Be Like Our Heavenly Father**

I want to be like my heavenly Daddy. I want to be like my Father. He is so good to me. And the more I open my eyes to see the blessings that He’s given me, the more amazed I am. Some of you might have thought I was a little silly about the coffee illustration last week, but the point was, I’m learning to open my eyes to every blessing, as many as I can see. Why? Because it does something to me. It affects my heart and makes me want to be like my Father, too. I want to be a giver, I want to be generous, and I want to do what my Daddy does because I so love my Father that I want to be like Him. Now watch this, Luke 6:32-35, this is radical.

*“But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil.”*

We want to give because we want to be like our Father who is kind and generous to the unthankful.

### **We Give to Share the Gospel**

Alvin Schmidt, in his book “How Christianity Changed the World” writes that the Latin word *caritas* from which we get our English word *charity*, he wrote this,

*“It meant giving to relieve economic or physical distress without expecting anything in return.”*

So the word *charity* means to help alleviate financial or physical distress without expecting anything in return. That means giving with no strings attached.

Schmitt continues,

*“Whereas liberalitas meant giving to please the recipient who would later bestow a favor on the*

giver.”

The word *liberal*, meaning *generous*, in Jesus’ and the apostles’ day meant giving and expecting something in return. You would find a wealthier person to give to because he could bless you more. Pagans almost never gave out of what today we would, ironically, call *liberality*, so that when Jesus came along and said, *Hey, you do good to those who can’t do good in return. You lend and expect nothing in return. You be kind to those who are not kind to you.* That was radical in that day because nobody gave like that. The Pharisees didn’t, the Romans didn’t, the Greeks didn’t. When they gave, they looked for somebody who was wealthy.

Here you are, middle class, you did all you could to scrimp and save so you could go and bless a wealthier person so that the wealthy person might unleash some of his wealth on you. That was the whole concept of giving. And here comes this teacher from Galilee, this young Man, who says, *No, no, no! God’s system is completely different. You give without any strings attached, no asking for anything back, give liberally, give to help expecting nothing.* Why? Because that’s how God is.

This is why I said this is a way we can help reach lost people because there is something powerful about a child of God, who gives generously to the hurting sinner. Whether it be financial, physical, emotional, it doesn’t matter what the distress is, when you minister without asking anything in return, pour out love unceasing as God has upon you, you are creating opportunities for the Gospel to be seen and then also heard.

Aristides was a man some claim was a student of John the Apostle. Here is what he wrote about Christians and their generosity in the year 125 A.D.,

“Christians live in hope and expectation of the world which is to come. So they do not embezzle what is held in pledge, nor covet what is not theirs. If one or other of them has servants or slaves, through love towards them they persuade them to become Christians, and when they have done so, they call them brethren without distinction.

“They love one another, esteem widows, and rescue orphans from any who ill-treat them. Whoever has [wealth] gives to him who has not, without boasting. When they see a stranger, they take him into their homes and rejoice over him as a very brother.

“Whenever one of their number who was poor passes from the world, each one of them according to his ability contributes to his burial. And if they hear that one of their number is imprisoned or afflicted on account of the name of their Messiah, all of them anxiously minister to his necessity, and if it is possible to redeem him they set him free. If there is among them any that is poor and needy, and they have no spare food, they fast two or three days in order to have food which they can supply to the needy one.”

Brothers and sisters, do you realize the evangelistic impact that could happen if we had hearts large like this? The impact it would make if we were willing to go without food two or three days

in order to be able to give to somebody who has nothing whatsoever? Jesus did say it, did He not? “The world will know that you are My disciples in that you love one another.”

Now I’m a theologian, or at least I want to be, I love theology and I don’t want to take anything away from theology, but when people are hurting they really, really don’t care how much you know. You’ve heard this before, haven’t you? They don’t really care how much you know, they just want to know you care. And when you show them you care, you now have an opportunity to share with them what you know. Because it’s what you know that motivates you to care.

What you saw earlier in the missions video is just a glimpse of the opportunities that await us as we take the Gospel not just to the world abroad but to our world here.

Those are the reasons we give.

## **2. The Procedure of Grace Giving**

I get these from the Scriptures.

### **Giving in the kingdom should be intentional.**

You mean to do it. This doesn’t rule out impulsive giving like a special offering that was unplanned. Intentional giving doesn’t rule out impulsive giving, but most of the New Testament is dealing with intentional giving. So that tells me I should not wait for a fuzzy feeling or some impression in order to be motivated to give.

Paul instructs the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 16 to plan on giving the first day of every week. Because most workers were paid daily for their work that necessitated therefore Christians would have to set aside daily what they would then give on Sunday. That requires a plan, friend. You need to be intentional. That’s why this week we’re asking you to get together with God and pray and let the Lord give you an intentional plan.

### **Your plan ought to deal with percentage giving.**

Again, I get this from 1 Corinthians 16:2. Paul instructs the Corinthians to give based on the proportion God gave to them. He doesn’t designate how much of a percent, he just simply says,

*“On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income,”*

A percentage. That’s why I said don’t worry about dollar amounts. Here is why, because most people who are wealthy get hung up on dollar amounts. They’re counting pennies. Every person who has any kind of wealth ends up being a counter, assessing, and totaling their wealth. Jesus taught us to be careful about counting because counting what you give can be deceptive.

When you get your year-end contribution statements and look at the amount given, and go, “Wow, I gave that much? That’s pretty good.” You compliment yourself. “Thank You, Lord. I didn’t realize I gave that much.” That’s dangerous for several reasons.

It may look like a lot but when you get down to percentages and proportions of your income, it may be nothing. Jesus didn’t just tell us a story, He showed us a real life example of that. Luke 21:1,

*“And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury, and He saw also a certain poor widow putting in two mites.”*

Just for information’s sake, a mite is the lowest monetary designation there was in the Jewish world. It’s just like our penny, we have nothing less than a penny, they had nothing less than a mite. Scholars say a mite was anywhere from 1/64 to 1/128 percent of a denarius, which was a day’s wage.

*“So He said, “Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all;”*

Now how can that be? She put in the equivalent to two dollars versus the thousands of dollars the rich men gave. My math says one thousand is more than two dollars, so how could she put in more than all of them? Jesus didn’t say she gave more than one of the rich guys, He says out of all of the rich guys that gave she gave more than them. How could that be? He answers in verse four,

*“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.”*

Jesus is saying that they gave but they didn’t even miss what they gave. They could have given more and they still wouldn’t have missed it, but she gave sacrificially.

In other words, percentage-wise she gave more than the rich people did. She gave a greater percentage of her income than they did. So I believe we need to think more about percentages because you may have given five thousand dollars to Oak Grove Baptist Church last year and that’s a good sum, wonderful, but what is that compared to the remainder you keep?

God doesn’t look at the five thousand dollars, He looks at the percentage you give, that’s what this story tells me. Is Jesus God? Yes, and God says, *Come here, disciples, this poor woman gave more than the rich guys*, what does that tell you? He didn’t look at the amount she gave or they gave, He looked at the percentage of their totality.

A.W.Tozer said, “Before the judgment seat of Christ, my service will be judged not by how much I have done, but by how much I could have done. In God’s sight, my giving is measured not by how much I have given, but by how much I could have given and how much I had left after I had made my gift.”



The most important figure is not what you actually give to God, but the amount that you keep.

Interesting way to look at it, isn't it? God is more interested in the percentage you keep than what you gave because the percentage you keep tells how much you really do love Him, not the percentage you give.

Some of you cannot give 50 percent of your income right now and I wouldn't ask for 50 percent of your income, I'm not the Holy Spirit. I'm not going to ask you for 10 percent, I'm going to ask you to pray and let God tell you.

And with that in mind, let me give you the third part of our plan to give:

### **Always plan to give more.**

Never be satisfied with the amount of giving you are doing.

The larger percentage you give, the lesser percentage you keep and that builds your faith. I wish I had more time to unpack that, but that's what I think Paul is saying in I Timothy. Let's go back to the text.

*“Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust,”*

(There is the word *faith*.)

*“in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.”*

So the more you keep the more your wealth possesses your heart and you begin to have faith in it to keep you safe, secure, healthy and happy. But the more you give the less your wealth possesses your heart and now the more you have to trust God to keep you secure, happy and healthy.

### **3. The Performance and Execution of Grace Giving**

How can I execute my percentage plan of grace giving always trying to increase it as God gives me grace?

**You perform it in faith.** There is a purposeful dependency on God when you give by grace and not by law or duty. When you say, “God, I'm going to give this amount by grace. I don't know how we're going to do this, but I believe you're leading me to do this,” there is a desperate dependency that sets in. You don't have to pray to have more faith, you have to have faith. You were made to lean upon God, not your money.

If you give with the mindset that you have to keep some in reserve to keep you safe, happy and

healthy, you're not trusting God. You're deceiving yourself. You don't have faith. Perhaps I misspoke, you do have faith but your faith is in money and not in God.

If your giving is by grace you know that you're not giving naturally, but that your giving is supernatural, it is a grace. I believe you can call it saving grace because it's saving you from the temptation of selfishness.

**You perform your grace giving with joy.** The performance or the execution of grace giving ought to be done joyfully and when you give it should be full of thanksgiving and praise, not worry. *How am I going to live this week? What if something unexpected happens and the car breaks down?* Friends, when you obey God you are trusting God with the consequences of your obedience.

For example, what if you hesitate to give because of some unforeseen mishap. Your concern is that you will have no money to meet an unforeseen emergency. And let's suppose the mishap is your car quits working. Do you believe God knows your car is going to break down before it breaks down? And if He says, *I want you to give this amount* and there is nothing left over for the week besides what you can provide for your family in the way of food, shelter and clothing, you are to obey and leave the consequences to Him.

God is not asking you to deprive your family. God is not saying to take food out of your children's mouth and give it to some other child, that's not what I'm advocating at all. God gives you income to provide for your family, to feed your children, to clothe your wife, to put a roof over their heads—praise the Lord! After that has been done, what do you have left? That becomes discretionary spending, not necessary spending. If you will begin to give God all of the money, and recognize it is His to begin with, your life will become so much easier.

There are a lot of things in my life, your life, that we really don't need, but we possess and want. When I learn to live and be content without the things I have, I increase what economists call margin. That's breathing room. And the more breathing room I have, the happier I am, the more comfortable I am. But if I've got to spend all of my income this week in order to survive and meet all the bills because I've got credit cards stacked up, I don't have any breathing room and therefore I'm not happy. I'm miserable, worried, and anxiousness sets in.

But giving becomes joyful when you are committed to the One who owns the cattle on a thousand hills—who, in fact, owns the hills—and you can know that God will support you.

What I would like to see is that when we give our giving ought to be one of the most joyful things that is happening in the worship services because God has given this and it is now a grace for me to be able to turn loose. That is a grace.

In conclusion, the unsaved world needs to see how much joy there is in God. I believe if they could see how joyful and pleasurable God is more people would want to be saved.

Your children need to see how much joy there is in God for you. They see you spend your money. You can try to keep it a secret, but they go to the mall with you, they sometimes go to Wal-Mart with you, they know when you get a new car, they see how you spend your money and therefore they see what your priorities are. I'm not asking if God is one of your priorities, I'm asking is He the *chief* priority? If He is, then your giving will reflect that.

If God isn't the chief priority, then wherever your money is going is what your child sees as your priority. Your child will see you giddy about the new car or the new addition on the home or the trip to the mall, they will see your joy over your purchases, but do they see you giddy about your opportunity to give to the glory of God and His kingdom's advancement? Do they see that? We've been praying for our kids to be saved and I think this is instrumental. If they don't see our giving to the kingdom and its advancement, why would they be so quick to make Him the chief priority of their life? It doesn't make sense why they would.

Someone said if a man is truly converted his pocketbook gets inverted, meaning turned upside down. Martin Luther said there are three conversions,

*“First, head  
Second, heart,  
Third, purse.”*

Oak Grove, we have the opportunity to put ourselves in the stream of God's flow by giving by grace, giving generously and giving by faith. The Lord will always respond to that kind of obedience. It never goes unheeded or unanswered. Let's decrease our joy in things and increase our joy in God by a plan to distribute our wealth for the glory of God. You say, *I want to be less worldly and more godly*, well, it starts with the things you have. Let's decrease our joy in the things we possess and increase our joy in God by planning to distribute our wealth which He has generously given to us for the glory of God and the joy of our children and the joy of all peoples. Amen.

