

Exodus 35 - 36:7

Just Out For The Money?

Rick Warren, pastor of Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, California preaches to over 20,000 people every weekend in their 6 services. But 24 years ago it was just Rick and his family and a Bible study in their home.

Rick Warren did something similar to Bill Hybels in the Chicago area. They both went out and surveyed people who didn't go to church. They asked them why not?

They wanted to know, what were the barriers. Rick Warren said, "The answers I got were not at all what I expected or what I wanted to hear! But over the years, I found these same complaints still being used by folks who don't attend any church."

What do you suppose the top 2 reasons were? Rich Warren got the same responses in California that Bill Hybels did in Chicago. I'd venture to say if you took the survey here in Maryland you'd get the same responses.

"The church is irrelevant. It's not speaking to my life. And, the church is more interested in my money than in me."

You know, I have to say that I can identify with those responses. I've been in some churches that made me feel exactly the same way. In fact, I'm sure most of us have.

I can remember when I was a kid people from my parents' church, which they only attended once or twice a year, coming around to our house to collect pledges my parents reneged on.

In the latest issue of Christianity Today is an article about the Trinity Broadcasting Network on cable TV. TBN pays Paul Crouch and his wife Jan \$765,000 a year. If you've ever seen the programming, all they do is ask for money.

Money can be a real "hot button" issue with people. Especially if it's combined with religion.

Of course, we know that trouble with money and religion is nothing new. 487 years ago Martin Luther was challenging his church over money. The 95 thesis he nailed on the church door in Wittenberg, Germany had the title: *Disputation of Doctor Martin Luther on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences*.

Thesis 26-28 says, The pope does well when he grants remission to souls, not by the power of the keys (which he does not possess), but by way of intercession.

They preach man who say that so soon as the penny jingles into the money-box, the soul flies out [of purgatory].

It is certain that when the penny jingles into the money-box, gain and avarice can be increased, but the result of the intercession of the Church is in the power of God alone.

The Protestant Reformation had it's start over money. Someone was complaining about the church's misuse of money.

Money is a powerful force. It can be used as a powerful tool for good, and it can be used as a powerful tool for evil.

It's no coincidence that the Bible talks about money as much as it does. The Bible literally has hundreds of verses dealing with money. In fact, the Bible goes so far as to say that our view of money is a window into our soul.

Jesus put it this way, *Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.* (Luke 12:34).

This morning we've come to the end of our study of the book of Exodus. It's really interesting how the Book of Exodus concludes. God has brought His people out of slavery in Egypt.

He's provided for their needs and kept them safe. He's led them through the wilderness and given them His commandments. He's even forgiven them after they rebelled and worshipped a golden calf.

Now as the book ends God once again gives them instructions for building the Tabernacle which they now follow through on.

Remember, the tabernacle was a portable place of worship that was filled with symbolism for the Jewish people. But most importantly, in the center of the tabernacle was the holy of holies where God would dwell.

Now, like any good church building project, chapter 35 starts with an offering.

A lot of times when we think of the OT strictly in terms of tithing and percentage giving that was required by God. But we're going to see some universal principles for giving here that fit any age, and any situation.

First of all though, let me try to clarify some basic biblical concepts about money.

I. First, ultimately everything belongs to God so what we have is just on loan.

Rush Limbaugh says he's got, "Talent on loan from God." Some might question that, but we can honestly say we have material possessions on loan from God.

The Bible says: *The earth is the LORD'S, and all its fullness (Psa 24:1) For every beast of the forest is Mine, And the cattle on a thousand hills. (Psa 50:10) The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,' says the LORD of hosts. (Hag 2:8)*

The NT asks us this question: *What do you have that you did not receive? (I Cor 4:7)*
The answer is nothing.

As Creator God owns everything, yet He chooses to entrust us with wealth. You say, "Yea, I wish He'd entrust me with a little more. Or a lot more for that matter."

The Biblical principle is, "God owns it all, but He allows us to manage some of it for Him."

We can be wise managers or we can be foolish managers, but we're all managers to one degree or another.

Now, if we start with that perspective on money, that ultimately all things belong to God, it's going to really help us be in control over our money rather than our money controlling us.

The key to financial freedom isn't having tons of money. There's lots of rich people who are in bondage to their money. The key to financial freedom is contentment and contentment comes from seeing money from God's point of view.

I. Ultimately all money belongs to God.

II. A second principle, before we get to our passage, There's Danger In The Love Of Money

Let's take a test, How many people in this room like money, raise your hand.

Some people didn't raise their hand! I want all the people who didn't raise their hand to get out their wallets and give their money to some who raised their hand.

We all like money because it buys us stuff. It buys us food, it buys us shelter, and it buys us stuff we don't necessarily need but would like to have.

There's a big difference from enjoying what money can buy and actually loving money.

Paul warned young pastor Timothy: *Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.* (I Timothy 6:6-10)

You'll find some godly rich people in the pages of the Bible, and you'll find some ungodly rich people. The same with poor people.

The real key is the attitude of our heart.

Have you ever noticed that when we talk about rich people they're always people who have more than we do?

I haven't been all over the world, but I've traveled enough to know that I'm rich. And you're rich too. You may not feel like it but compared to the rest of the world you are. Over 24,000 people die from hunger related diseases every day in our world. That's over 8.7 million a year.

We're rich in this country and it makes it really hard for us to keep money in it's proper perspective.

There's Danger In The Love Of Money and we all deal with that danger every day.

But then there's a third thing we want to see from the Bible this morning,
III. Giving of our wealth is a response to God's goodness.

Listen to these Biblical promises: *Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may*

be food in My house, And try Me now in this," Says the LORD of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it. (Mal 3:10)

You say, "That's Old Testament. God promised physical blessings to Israel. We live in a different time."

How about this from Jesus: *"Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."* (Luke 6:38)

Or this promise from the NT: *He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 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. (Corinthians 9:6&8)*

Any honest reading of the Bible, Old or New Testament, will bring you to the same conclusion: God has definite and clear promises of blessing when giving is done His way.

God isn't poor. He's not going to close up shop if people don't give. He doesn't need the money. God's doing just fine.

But He has chosen to give to us his most valuable possession, His only begotten Son. He wants us to receive His gift of life and then experience the joy of sharing what we have by giving to what He's doing in the world.

II Corinthians 8:9 says: *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.*

There was a time when Jesus was rich. You won't find it in the Gospel accounts though. On earth He was purposefully poor.

But He was rich once. In the upper room before His death He prayed, "Father, glorify Me with the glory which I had with you before the world was."

There was a time when everything in the universe belonged to Him. All the angelic hosts bowed down in continuous worship of His name. He owned it all.

Then He gave it up voluntarily. The Bible says, “He humbled Himself and took on the form of a servant.”

The Creator of all. The King of kings, became one of His creation. And He did it for a very specific reason. He did it all so that He could go to the cross.

You steal once and you’re a thief. You lie once and you’re a liar. You sin once and you’re a sinner. We’re all guilty before God.

That’s why the Bible says that Jesus died for the sins of the world. We’re all sinners who deserve God’s judgment.

Instead, Jesus Christ, the second person of the trinity, became poor. He became flesh and died on a cross for our sins so that you might become rich. Not financially, but where it really counts: eternally.

You know where that verse is found? II Corinthians 8:9? Right in the middle of a passage on giving.

Why would we give to God? Because He’s given so much for us.

Now all that was kind of the introduction to our passage!

Turn to Exodus 35 pg 83

What I want us to see is the giving principles in Exodus 35. These same principles are the ones God wants us to go by today.

These are principles of spiritual growth and spiritual response to God. If churches harp on giving all the time they naturally will turn people off.

But, if churches don’t teach on Biblical principles for giving at all, they’ll be cheating them out of a blessing.

God’s not in the business of raising funds but He is in the business of raising His children. Part of our spiritual maturity level is measured by our attitude toward giving.

So lets look at these timeless giving principles from Exodus.

Moses gets all the people together. **Read verses 4-5**

(1) The People Gave Voluntarily

God didn't say I'm levying a tax on everybody. He didn't say I want everyone to give so much. God said, "Your building a place to worship Me. I want what comes from willing hearts."

Moses gives God's instructions and then look at **verses 20-22 (through "heart")**

You see what happened here. There wasn't any big emotional appeal for funds. Moses didn't tell heart-tugging stories until he gets them all eating out of his hand. He says God wants willing givers. That's it. End of sermon, everybody goes home.

Why?

So everyone could make their own decision about how much they're going to give without any pressure.

That's not good salesmanship is it? A good sales person closes the deal while the prospect is hot. You don't want them to have time to think it through.

Moses wanted the people to have time to think it through. God wants His people to give from a willing heart.

Hold your place here in Exodus and turn to II Corinthians 8 pg 1029.

Look at 8:12 Read

God doesn't ask you to give more than you're able. But He does want you to do your giving willingly. **Read 9:7**

We've pointed this out in past messages, but the Greek word translated "cheerful" in vs 7 is the word *hilaros*. *Hilaros* is obviously the basis for our English word "hilarious."

What this confirms to us is that God loves an enthusiastic, joyful, willing, giver. God does not want people grudgingly reaching into their pockets and saying, "There they go again, asking for my money."

That's one of the reasons we don't pass an offering plate. There are several, but this is one of them. An offering plate asks everyone to give whether they want to or not.

We want you to give to God as an act of worship. We want you to plan and prepare and give wisely. We want you to give willingly.

We don't pass out pledge cards for projects. No one will ever come to your door to collect your pledge.

God's method of giving is to give willingly out of a heart of love, in enthusiastic gratitude for all that God has done.

If you can't give willingly. If you can't give with a smile on your face, then we don't want your money. We mean that sincerely.

Back to Ex 35

(1) The People Gave Voluntarily

(2) The People Gave Abundantly **Read vs 22-24**

These people were excited about giving. In fact look at this: **Read 36:4-7**

What was going on here? There was no arm twisting. No pressure tactics. People gave because they wanted to give. God hadn't wiped them off the face of the earth after the golden calf debacle. God had met their needs and delivered them from slavery. How could they do anything less than give back to their God?

Tony Campolo is always a controversial speaker. One time he was asked speak at a woman's conference. Before the president of the conference introduced him as their guest speaker, she read a very moving letter from a missionary who was calling out for help in response to a great need on the mission field that required a sum of \$4,000.00.

The president of the conference then turned to Tony Campolo and asked him if he would pray that God would provide the resources to meet this need! Tony Campolo, who is a very outspoken man, said, "No! I won't pray for the need to be met. I believe that God has already provided the resources, and all we have to do is give. Then, he challenged each woman in the room to follow his lead, and he put every bit of cash he had with him on the table.

To make a long story, short: the result was that more than the \$4,000.00 needed was collected that day, and the lesson learned was this: God always supplies where there is need; and, He supplies through those to whom He has entrusted finances.

(1) The People Gave Voluntarily

(2) The People Gave Abundantly

(3) The People Gave Proportionately

The people who had gold, gave gold. The people who had silver, gave silver. The people who had bronze, gave bronze. Some people gave their skills.

Read 35:25-35

In both of our building programs here we committed not to borrow any money. We believe that God will supply as we learn to trust Him. Both times it was a real stretch for us. There were times when we we honestly didn't know where the money was going to come from.

You know where it came from? Some people over the three years we raised money gave large amounts. They had the ability and they gave. But many people didn't have large sums of money available.

They gave smaller amounts. Our goal was to have everyone involved at some level. When all was said and done we wanted every person, from kids to adults to be able to stand back and say, "I had a part in that building. God used my offering."

We had kids who sold their Barbi collections. Others made bird houses and sold them to raise money. People auctioned off rare items on ebay.

One gave several dolls passed down from her mother and grandmother. When it was suggested that she keep them to pass on to her children this is what she said, *"It would be better to have treasure in heaven and help others get there through the message that will be presented to more people in a larger church than for me to keep it for someone in my family."*

That's gripping isn't it?

The amounts were small and large. The ways people got extra funds to give were many and varied. And in the end God took everything from the nickels and dimes from the 4&5 year olds to the larger amounts from others and used it all to get us into this building debt free.

Everybody had a stake in what was happening and everybody got involved. That's God's way of building His kingdom.

Ultimately giving isn't about the amount. It's about the heart attitude.

Back in II Cor 9 the Bible says: *He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart...*

It says in another place: *Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him...*

I'm all for planned giving. Our family has always used a percentage as a minimum. What we've never done is used a percentage as a maximum.

If you tithe, great, but don't limit yourself to 10%.

At times God may have much greater things planned and you don't want to miss out on your chance to get on board.

There's one other obvious implication from Ex 35 and That's that (4)*The people gave wisely.* They weren't just all sitting out there in the desert and some stranger comes along with a good story and they give him an offering.

They knew Moses character. They knew where the money was going. They could check up and see how it was being used.

We believe that we're responsible to God for every penny that comes in here.

We built without borrowing so we could continually increase our spending in world missions and care & concern. We so much want to spend our funds on getting God's word out and serving people in need.

It's been an thrilling time for us. And we're excited about what God is going to do through this church in the years to come.

Giving: It's a challenge. It's a privilege. It's a blessing.

I want to close with some excerpts from a letter that came from a young family in our congregation. We'll print it in its entirety in the next newsletter, but I needed to share this with you now because we need some very focused prayer.

“Earlier this year Pastor Ed and Sandy went to India to visit K.D. and Sheela Bhutt. When Pastor Ed reported the details of the trip, God gripped our hearts in a unique way.

When we saw the pictures of the cross at the elementary school and heard how it was the only witness in that area, and how God had opened this door of ministry for K.D. and his family who had sacrificed so much for Jesus, we wanted to do something.

It seemed that the opportunity for ministry was gigantic, but the only witness around was K.D. and his ministry. Millions live and die there without knowing Christ. When we heard about how they wanted to establish a Christian high school with the potential to reach many more for Christ we felt a burden that seemed like it was from the Lord.

We had inherited some money from a godly relative and the amount was slightly more than what K.D. needed to purchase the land for a high school. During Pastor Ed's report I thought about how God supplied us with more than enough to help. At the end of the service I turned to my wife (both of us teary eyed) and I almost instantly knew she was thinking the same thing. She mentioned to me how we had enough to completely purchase the land they needed. I shared with her how I was thinking the same thing, more and more strongly as Pastor Ed spoke. (another 20 minutes and we may have been going to India ourselves!) After the service we spoke with Pastor Ed and Sandy and shared our intentions. I think they were kind of floored.

Now, don't get me wrong. We don't normally go around making major life decisions on the spur of a moment. A few things have prepared us for that day. For one, we decided during our engagement that we would always give God at least 10% of whatever He gives us, even if we couldn't see how it would work.

Also, we've learned to trust that God answers prayer and that He speaks clearly to His children.

Since that day we have continued to pray that it is indeed the Lord's will, and we prayed that if it isn't, for Him to clearly show us.

In answer to that prayer He has given us one confirmation after another that it's what He wants us to do. For a few logistical reasons, it has taken several months for everything to line up so we could give the money. I believe God has graciously used that time to confirm to us that we are doing His will.

I'm not saying that I haven't had thoughts like, "That would pay for our kids college." or "You could invest that for retirement."and other similar thoughts. But each time, I think of all the children who's lives and eternal destination could be changed by this ministry in India. We are also confident that God will continue to meet the needs of our family and future generations."

Last week this young family gave the church a cashiers check for \$150,000 which we promptly wired to "Temple of Christ Fellowship" in India.

We need you to specifically pray the KD could find just the right piece of property for the right price that would best for the school.

I have to tell you I've been challenged by a lot of things in my Christian walk, but I don't know that anything has so moved me and caused me to reevaluate my own priorities.

This couple told me about their decision in between services the day I gave the India report. I stood up there in that room with tears streaming down my face trying to get my composure back so I could preach the next service.

Where are you in the whole process of learning to give back to the God who became poor so that you might become rich?