

PROSPERITY WITH A PURPOSE

7

Principles of
Generosity

LEON FONTAINE

Introduction

Peace, joy, health and prosperity overflow in Heaven, and that's what God wants for us here as well.

If you grew up going to church, you know that there are many different beliefs on money floating around out there. Some believers may hold tightly to their money, while others give it away freely. And some believe that poverty is Godly, resisting any talk of financial success. So where did this huge range of beliefs come from?

First, let's go back to early church history. Back then, thousands of Christians faced death because they refused to recant their faith and worship the Roman emperor. Then a new leader came to power and made Christianity the state religion, ending the persecution. That sounds great—but this emperor began to institute new doctrines about poverty as a means of controlling the church and funnelling more money to the government.

People began to believe that being poor was Godly. Yet nothing could be further from the truth! If you go to the poorest countries of the world, you'll find a concentration of drugs, prostitution and people killing each other just to steal food for their kids. **There's nothing beautiful or Godly about poverty.**

"In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."
Matthew 6:9–10 (NKJV)

In Matthew 6, Jesus prayed for **God's will to be done on Earth "as it is in Heaven."** And what do we find in Heaven? Is it a place of bankruptcy and barely getting by? Not even close! The streets are paved in gold. **Peace, joy, health and prosperity overflow in Heaven, and that's what God wants for us here as well.**

The Word makes it very clear: **God's will is for you to be blessed and for your work to prosper** (Deuteronomy 28:8). And the best part about being blessed? You're able to be a greater blessing to others!

When you understand the foundations of what God says about money, you can learn how to be generous with the money you're blessed with. Let's dive into seven Biblical principles of generosity!

Change Your Perspective

As long as you put God first, you can be generous, kind and caring as you prosper; you will simply have more to give!

Nowhere in the Bible does it say that you're more spiritual or holy when you're poor. If you picked up this belief somewhere, it is profoundly affecting your ability to handle money.

"And you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you the power to get wealth." **Deuteronomy 8:18 (NKJV)**

When you make a conscious decision to improve your finances, your negative belief system about money will sabotage your intentions. For example, if deep down you think that wealthy people are selfish and manipulative, it will be impossible for you to get ahead financially because you despise the very thing you would like to become. Before you can hope to improve your financial situation, you need to confront your belief about wealthy people.

Without money, how can we be financially generous to others? How can we give to our church and other ministries that get the word out about Jesus?

First Samuel 16:7 (NKJV) says that "the Lord looks at the heart," not income level. Some who have wealth are unbelievably generous and some who do not are selfish. **Money isn't the problem—putting it first is.** You're not to put your family above God either, but that doesn't mean God hates it if you have a family!

You can better your finances without worrying that it will change you into someone you don't like. **As long as you put God first, you can be generous, kind and caring as you prosper—you'll simply have more to give!**

In the next chapter, we'll talk about how to be generous with the abundance that God will bring to your finances when you change your perspective on money.

Be Generous

It feels so good to be used by God to bless someone.

There's something powerful about generosity.

For one thing, it feels great to be on the receiving end. When you're believing God to meet a need, and someone comes along to bless you out of the blue, it's such an amazing feeling!

At the same time, it's also important to have a passion for giving to others.

I remember a certain couple at my dad's church when I was a teenager. The man had lost his job and was struggling to even put food on the table. Although I wasn't making much money at the time, I wanted to help. So, I went out to buy groceries and secretly left the bags on their front porch.

In our church's midweek service, there was a time for sharing testimonies. That Wednesday, this man stood up with tears in his eyes and told the story of how he was praying for a way to feed his kids. He'd been trying to figure out where he could borrow some money, when he opened his door and discovered his porch covered in grocery bags.

Nineteen-year-old me sat there in the service fighting off the biggest grin. **It felt so good to be used by God to bless someone.** I was hooked! From then on, I've always wanted to give wherever I can.

It feels so good to be used by God to bless those around you. When you give generously and sacrificially, it will become something you'll want to do over and over again.

"And I have been a constant example of how you can help those in need by working hard. You should remember the words of the Lord Jesus: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"
Acts 20:35 (NLT)

As God continues to bless your life, financially and in other areas, I encourage you to look for every opportunity to give! God created us to be cheerful, generous givers.

Use Wisdom

Let's look for ways to meet needs, but let's do it with wisdom.

Living generously is exciting. It gives you a sense of purpose and anticipation as you start every morning thinking, "Who can I bless today?"

And while it's great to find new ways to meet people's needs, we also need to be very aware of "manipulators." Because, unfortunately, some people are very good at manipulating others for money.

Years ago, there was a man attending our church who was a pro at it. He would walk around looking dejected, and inevitably a kind couple would say, "Hey, are you okay? You look a little down."

He would then spin a story about how he couldn't pay his hydro bills, afford groceries or even keep his house. In the end, the couple would take compassion on him and write him a cheque for over a thousand dollars. Unfortunately, this man had already taken advantage of a dozen families before he was caught.

"Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves."

Matthew 10:16 (NKJV)

Not all manipulators are found in the pews. Some are found behind pulpits too. I've been in church services or watched pastors on TV who guilted people into giving. But when you're made to feel rotten and self-centred for not contributing, that's emotional manipulation. It's not a good feeling, and I'm sure you can relate!

With that said, **don't let manipulators turn you off from giving altogether.** You may have been burned in the past, but God's desire is still for us to be generous with the blessings He has poured into our lives. **Let's look for ways to meet needs, but let's do it with wisdom.** As Jesus described in Matthew 10, we can be as cunning as serpents and as harmless as doves, at the same time!

Reap What You Sow

God often compares our giving to the process of sowing and reaping.

What happens when you give?

Some of us were raised to give and never expect anything back. Yet God's Word clearly says that **when you give generously, blessing is coming back to you.**

Imagine a farmer who buys the seed and equipment to plant a wheat field. His wife asks him, "What do you think we're going to get per acre?"

The farmer replies, "Oh no, we're not planting to *get* anything. That would be wrong, and God wouldn't be pleased. We're going to abandon that field and not expect anything in return." That would be one poor, empty-handed farmer!

But I will say this to encourage your generosity: the one who plants little harvests little, and the one who plants plenty harvests plenty.

2 Corinthians 9:6 (VOICE)

God often compares our giving to the process of sowing and reaping. Second Corinthians 9:6 says that when you plant—or give—only a little, you can expect a small harvest. But when you give generously, a harvest of plenty is coming your way. Some will say this verse is about immaterial, spiritual things, but 2 Corinthians chapter 9 is actually all about finances!

Each of us have needs and dreams that we are believing God to fulfill. When you give, especially during a time of need, it can feel like that gift is simply gone. But money sown into God's work is never thrown away. **When you give to God, it might leave your hand, but it never leaves your life.**

Just like a wise farmer, when you put seed in the ground, expect that the ground will produce an exponential return. **Give generously to help people and build the Kingdom—and believe that blessings are pouring back into your life!**

Give With Joy

God wants you to give what you feel good about. He loves a cheerful giver!

Many people have never started a habit of giving. Some simply weren't raised to be generous. For others, they may be in a tight spot where they've lost a job, and giving is the last thing on their mind.

But let me introduce you to God's view of giving. **He wants you to give what you feel good about.** He loves a cheerful giver! If we give out of fear or guilt, that's not faith.

I'm not saying giving is always easy. Sometimes I'll be thinking about giving toward a need, and a specific dollar amount will come to mind. But right away, my brain kicks in and reasons that number down to almost nothing. The thing is, **when you sense in your heart something you want to give, and you listen to Holy Spirit's guidance, that's a gift you can get excited about.** Your brain might be nervous, but your heart is eager to see what God will do.

Giving grows out of the heart—otherwise, you've reluctantly grumbled "yes" because you felt you had to or because you couldn't say "no," but this isn't the way God wants it. For we know that "God loves a cheerful giver."

2 Corinthians 9:7 (VOICE)

If you've never established a habit of giving, start with what you feel good about. Then give that amount cheerfully. As you give with joy, commit your career, investments and business to Him and look to His Word for guidance in all that you put your hand to.

In God's Kingdom, prosperity is always for a purpose! As you give into the lives of others, even if you start small, you'll be amazed at the breakthrough you'll experience in your own life.

Use Your Blessings for a Purpose

Believe for every one of God's promises, but never forget that you're here for a purpose.

God's plans for you are absolutely huge. According to Psalm 139:13, God formed your inward parts. He placed gifts and abilities inside you so you could achieve amazing things in this lifetime. You can't even imagine the great plan He's prepared for you or how He aims to use you for His exciting purposes (1 Corinthians 2:9).

Not only that, but God is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that you ask or think, according to the power that works in you (Ephesians 3:20). **It's clear that God wants you blessed in this lifetime; however, He also wants you to live a life of phenomenal purpose.**

I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death, so that one way or another I will experience the resurrection from the dead!

Philippians 3:10–11(NLT)

You need both: blessing and purpose. Paul knew this well. He often wrote of God's great plans for us, but he also prayed that he wanted to suffer with Jesus. It seems contradictory, but we can understand Jesus' sufferings and His compassion as well as His power. While living a life full of blessings and fun, we can **be filled with Jesus' compassion and remain focused on blessing others**. This is the best way to live, because just focusing on our own blessings will make us feel empty. We need our hearts to remain soft so we don't ignore the suffering of others.

Believe for every one of God's promises, but never forget that you're here for a purpose. **The mission God has for you is the most important thing on this planet, because your actions enlarge Heaven!**

Be a Blessing

God wants you to prosper—first for His cause and then for you. With all things He desires us to seek Him first.

We were made in the image of God, and He is a generous God. **He wants you to prosper so that you can be a blessing.**

Deep down, we would all like to be more generous, but often a fear of lack holds us back from knowing the joy of being a blessing. **There is no lack in God.** Psalm 23:1 (NLT) says, "The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need." Psalm 34:9 (CEV) says, "No one who honors the Lord will ever be in need." And according to Psalm 21:6 (AMP), we are to be "blessed and a blessing forever."

Notice that it doesn't say we are to be "blessed *only* to be a blessing." God wants us to enjoy the results of our hard work. Psalm 128:2 (NLT) says, "You will enjoy the fruit of your labor. How joyful and prosperous you will be!" **Although we were designed to be generous, we can enjoy ourselves too.**

This most generous God who gives seed to the farmer that becomes bread for your meals is more than extravagant with you. He gives you something you can then give away, which grows into full-formed lives, robust in God, wealthy in every way, so that you can be generous in every way, producing with us great praise to God.

2 Corinthians 9:10-11 (MSG)

God wants you to prosper—first for His cause and then for you. With all things He desires us to seek Him first.

Seeking health, relationships, money or anything else can get you in trouble if it takes over the number one spot in your life. **Similarly, money has the power to destroy you... but it is a powerful tool in your hands if you put God first!**

Conclusion

God's will for you is to live days of Heaven on Earth. Yes, you will have struggles, but God wants life on earth to be "as it is in heaven."

The number one cause of stress in North America today is money related. And it's sad to say, believers often hold the most skewed beliefs on the topic.

God has a lot of thoughts about money, and He has never hesitated to share them. In fact, we can find about 2,000 Biblical references to money and possessions (compared to about 500 on faith), and 16 of Jesus' 38 parables deal with the topic.

God's will for you is to live days of **Heaven on Earth**. Yes, you will have struggles, but God wants life on Earth to be "as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10, NKJV).

Let them shout for joy and be glad, who favor my righteous cause; and let them say continually, "Let the Lord be magnified, who has pleasure in the prosperity of His servant."
Psalm 35:27 (NKJV)

Psalm 35:27 reminds us to "say continually, 'Let the LORD be magnified, who has pleasure in the prosperity of His servant.'" **We need to constantly remind ourselves of God's thoughts on prosperity.** With that in mind, I have a challenge for you. Read the following scriptures out loud, really meditating on their meaning:

- **God takes pleasure in prospering me.** (Psalm 35:27)
- **He has given me the ability to produce wealth.** (Deuteronomy 8:18)
- **I am enriched in every way so that I can be generous.** (2 Corinthians 9:11)

Try this daily for the next 30 days. Put your focus on God first... and believe. As He promised Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3, **He will bless you to be a blessing!**