**God’s Plan**

**Part 3**

**This Is How We Do It**

**2 Corinthians 9:6-14**

**2 Corinthians 9:6-11: “Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. As it is written: ‘They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor; their righteousness endures forever.’ Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord’s people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!”**

Prayer: Father, I’m not trying to change the people today. I’m not the Holy Ghost. Only You can minister to hearts. Today, I simply preach the Word. All I do is plant and water; You promise to give the increase. All I do is proclaim Jesus. Lift up Jesus. Point the people to Jesus. You will do the rest.

Not once while I was growing up did I ever wonder or worry about provision. My parents were good providers and worked hard to give us a financially stable and secure home environment. Even though my father was a pastor, I remember a time when he maintained a business on the side, which supplemented his income. My mother used her musical skills and taught piano from time to time.

We didn’t get everything we wanted, but we could afford occasional little luxuries. For instance, I remember when MC Hammer pants were *the* pants to have. They were significantly more expensive than the pants my dad had been buying for me up to that time. But when I informed him that I had to have a pair of MC Hammer pants, he bought them for me and I was too legit to quit! (Show picture)

My parents were generous givers to their church and the community. I know that my childhood experience with my parents contributed to my ability to become an obedient giver and trust God to meet my needs.

My dad and mom showed me that it doesn’t take an MBA to make wise financial decisions. Instead it takes good character and the application of sound, Biblical principles. They taught me to handle money God’s way, not man’s way. God has a plan for your money and man has a plan for your money.

Don’t believe man has a plan for your money? Try walking through an airport terminal, watching a sporting event on TV, driving through the metroplex, scrolling through social media, or watching your favorite YouTube video. Advertisements abound in all these different forms of media, and the advertisers invariably want to sell you something.

What’s the problem with all this? Well, there’s nothing wrong with advertisement. But taken together, the world we live in, and the people in it, have given us some pretty bad financial advice.

It’s easy to find evidence of how the world’s financial thinking can lead to greed, poverty, debt, and bondage. So what’s the alternative? Well, God has a plan for your money and his plan is so much better than man’s plan. And it isn’t as complicated as you might think; in fact, many of these things make sense once you give them some thought.

Here are a few things my parents taught me, and now I’m teaching my children the same things…

***Man’s Plan: God’s Plan:***

All I have is mine! All I have is God’s!

I need more money! I need to manage what I have!

Fear of loss! Faith in God!

Envy others! Be content!

Better house! Better home!

Live for today! Give for eternity!

Grasping hands & a grudging heart Generous hands & a grateful heart

Spend it all! Save for the future!

Keep up with your neighbors! Experience God’s care!

After Kim and I got married, we tithed faithfully because that’s what we were taught. We also gave more than the tithe from time to time. We believed in the biblical principles of sowing and reaping (PLOW THE SOIL, SOW SEED, REAP WHAT YOU SOW, SOW FIRST, THEN REAP, TRUST GOD AND EXPECT A RETURN), and we trusted God to be our provider. In nearly 25 years of marriage, I can recall only a few times when I was really concerned about our personal finances, and each time God came through for us and showed Himself faithful.

One time was in 2007/2008 when I moved my family from California to Texas. The housing market was crashing and we’d lost thousands and thousands of dollars. In addition we were unable to sell our home back in California while we were trying to put roots down in Texas. Two mortgage payments had taken a toll and funds had run out. Kim and I took our need to the Lord and thanked Him for His provision. We had been sowing faithfully and were confident He would provide. Things didn’t change immediately, but we continued putting our requests before Him and thanking Him daily. We continued giving by faith. When we absolutely had to have some relief God supernaturally provided the exact amount needed to not only take care of the remaining amount owed in California, but also to start fresh here in Texas. Our Father God had come through for us again. This is just one of the hundreds of stories I could tell. And the fact is…we’re in the middle of a story that’s not quite finished yet. We’re trusting God for supernatural provision.

The promises in God’s Word are wonderful, and there’s nothing quite as sweet as a firsthand experience of God’s provision. It builds faith in you like nothing else can. God wants each one of us to experience His loving provision for us, but it’s only possible as we give to Him. In trust, we must step out and give Him something to work with.

This is why I shared with you my early exposure to parents who were givers. I realize that in the area of giving, I have good early roots that run deep, and that made it easier for me to receive God’s grace in this area. But perhaps you aren’t so fortunate. Maybe your parents didn’t know how to handle their finances well; or maybe you were born in poverty. Heart wounds affect our attitudes and behaviors, and can make it more difficult to trust God and receive His promises. On top of this, we all are contending with spiritual strongholds (or strong ways of thinking) like poverty, which can distort our understanding of God’s plan to prosper us.

This is why I’ve been bringing you the *God’s Plan* series this month. Limitation and lack aren’t God’s plan for you. His plan is for you to prosper – spiritually, emotionally, physically, and materially. In this series I’ve been addressing the wounds we carry in our hearts, and demolishing the spiritual strongholds that come against us. If you find yourself struggling with recurring fears about trusting God in area of your finances and Christ-like giving, you need to go back, re-watch this series (calvarychurch.cc), examine your heart, and get the inner healing and spiritual deliverance you may need. You’ll never be able to prosper or become a Christ-like giver until you do. Your Father God wants to offer you so much, He wants you to enjoy life, but your ability to receive it will stay limited until your heart receives major healing and your mind is changed about prosperity.

The main reason you aren’t receiving God’s best is because you’re willing to settle for less. Very few are committed to God’s best. We’ve been influenced more by the world – man’s plans – than by God’s Word and “dumbed down” to accept far less than what God has provided. As long as you can live with less than God’s best, you will. That is a powerful truth.

You have to get sick and tired of being sick and tired before you’ll aggressively pursue God’s best. You have to have a holy dissatisfaction with mediocrity before you can experience all that God has planned for you. It doesn’t happen accidentally or automatically. If you don’t pursue it, you won’t get it.

Everything in our fallen world naturally goes from good to bad. Things don’t get better without effort. We have to seek to find, knock to get the door opened, and ask before we receive (Matt. 7:7). We must raise our sights and aim higher. Most people are shooting at nothing and hitting it every time.

Do you know what I hope happens during this series? You reach a point where you won’t live with anything less than God’s best.

That attitude is missing in the lives of far too many Christians. The bar of expectations has been lowered in regards to healing, finances, and more.

I’m not trying to condemn anyone. We’ve all been raised in and influenced by an ungodly culture. And nobody learns how to receive God’s best overnight. It’s a process, but we need to begin moving in that direction. I haven’t arrived there either, but I’ve left and am on my way. I want God’s plan! He has far more for all of us than we’re experiencing.

This is where so many Christians become discouraged and conclude that God’s word doesn’t work. They don’t trust God, so they can’t believe His promises and receive His best. Instead of surrendering to His grace, they see what He promises and what He asks us to do, and they try to perform up to His standard through their own human effort. Of course, this can’t and won’t work. From the beginning, Father God always intended that we’d have His nature and live in partnership with Him through the life and the grace of the Spirit of Christ in us. Most Christians accept their salvation as a work of God’s grace through faith, but then they begin trying to live a Christ-like life through their own efforts. Many people believe we’re saved by grace, but sanctified by works. No! It’s all by grace through faith. It’s by grace from start to finish!

The early Galatian church attempted this mixing of grace and law to their detriment. Paul wrote to them

**Galatians 3:3-5: “How foolish can you be? After starting your new lives in the Spirit, why are you now trying to become perfect by your own human effort? Have you experienced so much for nothing? Surely it was not in vain, was it? I ask you again, does God give you the Holy Spirit and work miracles among you because you obey the law? Of course not! It is because you believe the message you heard about Christ.”**

So, this week we’re looking at the behavior patterns of the Christian giver. Remember that these patterns are produced by the grace of God working within us. We’re to believe God’s promises and receive them by surrendering in trust to our Father God. We know that His grace will give us both the motivation and the power to become progressively Christ-like in character. Philippians 2:13 says that God is your inexhaustible source and He ignites you with both the desire and energy that matches His own delight.” God delights in you and you delight Him when you…

**1. GIVE WITH THE RIGHT MOTIVE**

**2 Corinthians 8:7: “Since you excel in so many ways—in your faith, your gifted speakers, your knowledge, your enthusiasm, and your love from us—I want you to excel also in this gracious act of giving.”**

**Jeremiah 5:30-31: “A horrible and shocking thing has happened in the land: The prophets prophesy lies, the priests rule by their own authority,  
and my people love it this way. But what will you do in the end?”**

**2 Corinthians 2:17: “Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, as those sent from God.”**

**2 Corinthians 9:6-7: Remember this—a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop. You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don’t give reluctantly or in response to pressure. ‘For God loves a person who gives cheerfully.’”**

**2. GIVE GENEROUSLY**

**John 12:1-8: “Six days before the Passover celebration began, Jesus arrived in Bethany, the home of Lazarus—the man he had raised from the dead. A dinner was prepared in Jesus’ honor. Martha served, and Lazarus was among those who ate with him. Then Mary took a twelve-ounce jar of expensive perfume made from essence of nard, and she anointed Jesus’ feet with it, wiping his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance. But Judas Iscariot, the disciple who would soon betray him, said, ‘That perfume was worth a year’s wages. It should have been sold and the money given to the poor.’ Not that he cared for the poor—he was a thief, and since he was in charge of the disciples’ money, he often stole some for himself. Jesus replied, ‘Leave her alone. She did this in preparation for my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me.’”**

**3. GIVE THOUGHTFULLY AND PRAYERFULLY**

**4. GIVE WILLINGLY**

**5. GIVE CHEERFULLY**

**Acts 20:35: “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”**

**6. GIVE PROPHETICALLY**

**2 Corinthians 9:6-14**