

# Is Your Checkbook Converted?

Philippians 4:14-23

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connect  
groups

## PATH

Martin Luther noted that three conversions are necessary for each person: heart, mind, and purse (wallet). It seems many of us try to separate what we believe in our hearts from how we behave with our finances. In the closing verses of Philippians, Paul thanked the church that supported his ministry for putting their money where their faith was. Pastor Skip unpacked one of the clearest theological statements about how money can become a tool for God's glory and a gauge of spiritual maturity:

I. Generosity Is Commended (vv. 14-16, 18)

III. Giving Is Rewarded (v. 19)

II. Interest Is Compounded (v. 17)

IV. Family Is Extended (vv. 20-23)

## POINTS

### Generosity Is Commended

- The Bible has roughly 2,000 verses that deal with money. That's more than the topics of prayer and faith combined.
- Largely, one can tell a lot about a person's spirituality by what he or she does with money.
- The church at Philippi is a model for us: to them, giving was an act of worship.
- Paul noted that the Philippians' giving was good: "you have done well" (v. 14).
- Paul understood that money is not evil; it's neutral. It's what we do with money that provides the barometer of our spiritual growth.
- Note the word *shared* (see vv. 14-15). One reason generosity is good is because it turns people into partners.
- Another reason generosity is good is because it pleases God (see v. 18). Paul used temple language in his letter by comparing giving to a temple sacrifice: an aroma (incense) that is pleasing to God.
- **Probe:** As Pastor Skip noted, our highest motivation for giving shouldn't be the church's needs, but because God deserves it. How does giving to a church or ministry make you a partner in ministry? Why is giving not so much about a particular need but a powerful God?

### Interest Is Compounded

- In verse 17, we get insight into heavenly accounting. Paul preached the gospel and the Philippian supporters would get credit.
- Paul's end desire was for the fruit of the ministry, not the funds. Principle: God

tallies the fruit from ministry and credits it to the supporters' account. When we get to heaven, we may meet people that benefited from our provision.

- We need to be careful how we invest our money. The important question is not, "Is there a proclaimed need?" but "Is the ministry producing fruit?"
- Jesus said, "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (Matthew 6:20). Always invest with heaven and God's kingdom in mind.
- **Probe:** How can giving to fruitful ministries transform your idea of giving? Would you support a business that was about to go bankrupt? Ask yourself: Is where you are currently giving money being fruitful? Are lives being changed? Are you making a heavenly impact?

### Giving Is Rewarded

- Verse 19 is frequently misunderstood as "If you're a Christian, no matter how you live, God will automatically give you what you need." This is taking the text out of context and making it a pretext for incorrect interpretation. It should be understood as "To you who are generous, God will supply your need." God blesses those that bless God and others.
- Note some key words: *full* and *supply* (see vv. 18-19). Both words are the same in Greek. Paul was saying "You filled me up for God's glory, so He will fill you up."
- God's generosity extends to people who extend their generosity to others (see Proverbs 3:9; Proverbs 11:25; Proverbs 22:9; Luke 6:38).

- **Probe:** Since we can't out-give God, share about a time when your giving was rewarded by a person being served or saved. Without sharing the details, discuss the ministries you support that produce physical rewards (relief or aid) or spiritual rewards (church or ministry)? Why do you give to these ministries?

### Family Is Extended

- Verses 20-23 imply that Paul was able to reach the unreachable. "Caesar's household" (v. 22) likely referred to members of the imperial home, including the Praetorian Guard, Caesar's personal bodyguards.
- The Praetorian Guards were chained to Paul twenty-four hours per day, over six shifts. Paul had ample time to share the gospel with a captive audience.
- In Luke 16:1-13, Jesus taught a parable in which the lesson was to use possessions for eternal dividends.
- This truth can be summarized as follows: money can buy a bed but not sleep; books but not brains; food but not an appetite; finery but not beauty; a house but not a home; medicine but not health; pleasures but not peace; a crucifix but not a Savior; a church building but not heaven.<sup>1</sup>
- **Probe:** Have you ever been "chained" to someone (e.g. on an airplane or in a car) where you were able to have a conversation about Christ? If you haven't, share about a time when your material giving (money, food, etc.) led to someone hearing the gospel.

## PRACTICE

**Connect Up:** Since God doesn't need our money (He created and owns all good things), why do you think He commands Christians to give? Discuss these responses:<sup>ii</sup>

- Our giving changes us.
- Our giving brings God glory.
- Our giving blesses us and others.

**Connect In:** How does generous giving strengthen and support the family of God? Talk about this quote by J. Paul Getty: "Money is like manure. You have to spread it around or it smells." How can the support of productive ministries be likened to the spread of manure, the fuel for things to grow?

**Connect Out:** Why should the heart of giving be the salvation of people and the consummation of God's kingdom (peace, justice, etc.)? Can you think of any other reasons to give?

<sup>1</sup> Charles R. Swindoll, *The Tale of the Tardy Oxcart: And 1,501 Other Stories*, Nashville, Word Publishing, Inc., 1998.

<sup>ii</sup> Cortni Marrazzo, "Why Does God Want Me to Give?" November 15, 2013, <https://www.crosswalk.com/family/finances/why-does-god-want-me-to-give.html>, accessed 1/7/18.