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MONEY, MONEY, MONEY.....OR GOD

Speaking to the people, he said, "Watch out! Protect yourself against the least bit of greed. Life is not defined by what you have, even when you have a lot." Then He told them this story: "A certain man started out as a stock-clerk in Wal-Mart. His diligence, integrity, and good attitude caught the attention of his boss, and he went up the chain very rapidly. He became the youngest regional manager in the history of the company. He felt pangs of conscience for not spending more time with his wife and children, but he took exceedingly good care of them financially.

After a few years, he could have retired and done anything he wanted, but just then he was offered the top job, the dream job to which he had always aspired. It was too good an offer to turn down. Just before taking over his new job, while playing golf, suddenly his left arm started aching, then his jaw, then his chest, and he fell over dead. He had a huge funeral. He was respected for his wisdom, integrity, and hard work. His was an American success story. He was eulogized by the high and the mighty.

That night, at midnight, an angel appeared at the cemetery, moved to the oversized tombstone marking the man's final resting place, and wrote with his finger on the slab: "FOOL!" That was God's verdict on this man's life. (Luke 12)

Jesus also said, in Luke 16:11 (AMP), "*If you have not been faithful in the case of unrighteous mammon (deceitful riches, money, possessions), who will entrust to you the true riches?*" He called money and possessions "deceitful riches." Why deceitful? Because they deceive people into feeling secure and successful apart from God. And what are "the true riches?" They are those things only Christ can give us: forgiveness, love, peace, a relationship with God, eternal life.

The Bible tells us in many places to emulate God, be givers, give offerings to special needs, give to the poor, etc. But the Bible never tells us to "give" our tithes to God, but to "pay" our tithes. Why the distinction? If you owe money to the bank on your mortgage, when you make your payment the banker doesn't come out and thank you for your generosity. It was their money you borrowed, and you are just paying back what is theirs, plus interest.

We are not "giving" God anything when we pay our ten percent. He makes it clear that all of it really belongs to Him. He is the One who gives us life, health, and the ability to work, and He generously allows us to keep 90 percent of it, while promising to bless us for our faithfulness. But the tithe, the ten percent, is set aside for Him as a token recognizing that He really owns it all. It is sobering to see God's judgment on the nation of Israel in Malachi 3:9. He said, "*You are cursed*

with the curse, for you are robbing Me, even this whole nation because they were not paying their tithes. I understand that Christianity is based on grace, not law, and perhaps I am legalistic in my understanding of tithing. But the Bible says that the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil, and Jesus warned in the Sermon on the Mount that you can't love God and money, but that ultimately you must choose one or the other. Tithing is a discipline that can break the stranglehold of money over our hearts.

Where should our tithe go? A case can be made that it should go to the local church, but after carefully studying the New Testament, I came to believe long ago that we should pray and be led by the Spirit. (This is my conviction, and you may disagree.) There was a recent expose' on 20/20 reporting on the profligate lifestyles of many televangelists. I think we have an obligation to know how God's money is spent.

In Luke 19, Jesus told another parable, about a ruler who entrusted ten of his servants with a certain portion of money to be used for his advantage during the time of his absence. When the ruler returned, he extravagantly rewarded the faithful servants. Depending on their degree of faithfulness, He gave them rulership over cities, for goodness sake! He said, "*Because you have been faithful in a very little thing, you shall have authority over ten cities.*" Note that the ruler (representing God), called being faithful with our money "a very little thing." It is no big deal to be faithful in the use of our money if God has first place in our hearts. We know that our security is in God, and that no matter what happens we can trust Him. But if money has first place in our hearts, then we have become deceived into believing that money can give us happiness, security, and fulfillment, and we will find good reasons not to be givers. Even though we may legalistically give some of our money to God's work, there is no way we can be cheerful about it. "God loves a cheerful giver!" We might moan, "Great days, God not only tells me to give, but to be cheerful about it! Help me, Lord!"

The scariest part of this parable, and the part that is seldom mentioned, concerns the citizens of the land who sent a delegation to the ruler (the rightful king), and said to him, "*We don't want this man to become ruler over us.*" In Jesus' story, when the ruler returned, the following occurred: "*The indignant king ended by saying, 'But as for these enemies of mine who did not want me to reign over them - bring them here and slaughter them in my presence!'*" (Sometimes Jesus' punch lines can shock your socks off.)

You may recall hearing someplace that Jesus taught more about money than about any other subject. That is true. But Jesus' teachings, and this little teaching, are only incidentally about money. The whole point is: Who is your ruler, your

king, your God? Who or what is the great love of your life? If you love, trust, fear, or serve anything or anyone more than God, that is your god, and your god is an idol! Money is a common idol in this world.

This is the truth, my friends: There is a God. He is the Creator. He was and is revealed in the Holy Bible, the written Word, and through the Lord Jesus Christ, the living Word. This life is not about you and me, it is about Him. He is not a distant, implacable law-giver and judge, except to those who refuse to bow the knee to Him. He offers us a personal, loving relationship on the basis of a Heavenly Father to sons and daughters. That is an altogether novel, preposterous idea that Jesus came up with.

I'm not suggesting that tithing is a fool-proof test of our relationship with God. The Pharisees were rigorous tithers, and they hated God and crucified His Son. But our tithing and giving (two separate categories) is a little test ("*a very little thing*") to show where our heart is. And, again, God promises an extravagant reward for being faithful to Him in this little way. Read Luke 16 and Luke 19 in the Amplified Bible to see how our little sacrifices of love in this life will be rewarded beyond all we can imagine by our loving, giving, Heavenly Father. By the way, "loving" means "giving." True?

A FAITHFUL UNKNOWN PASTOR WITH A BIG ASSIGNMENT

Now I want to tell a story that ends with an invitation for you to give some of your money. (Ha! I just coincidentally had a little teaching about tithing, then I sock it to you with a challenge to give. Please don't call John Stossel and 20/20!)

About 21 years ago, a pastor in a small church in Humble, Texas (north of Houston) had a vivid dream. (The pastor's last name was Teel, and I don't know his first name or the name of his church.) God spoke to Pastor Teel in the dream and told him to immediately go to Mexico City and help an evangelist named Pepe Quiroz. Pastor Teel woke up, woke his wife up, and said, "Do we know anyone in Mexico by the name of Pepe Quiroz?" She said no. They decided to call and ask an acquaintance who knew some people in Mexico. The friend did not know that name either. Pastor Teel started packing his bag. He said that God told him to go immediately, and he was going. He caught a plane that afternoon.

While on the plane, praying, God spoke to him and told him not to stay at the airport but to go to a hotel, and not to go back home until he met Pepe Quiroz. When Pastor Teel checked into a hotel he phoned his wife to tell her where he was. She said that some man had called (not the acquaintance they had talked to), and he didn't identify himself. He gave her Pepe Quiroz' phone number in Mexico City. Pastor Teel called Pepe and asked him to come to the hotel. Pastor Teel didn't speak Spanish, and Pepe didn't speak English, so this communication was not as easy as it sounds. In about an hour, Pepe walked into the lobby, wondering what this was about and how he would recognize the stranger who called him. A large man immediately walked up to Pepe, shedding tears, and said, "Oh, Pepe, God sent me to help you." Wild!

Pepe was on his way to a pastor's meeting and invited Pastor Teel to come along. During the course of the meeting,

Pastor Teel received a prophecy, which he stood and spoke forth (someone translated into Spanish). God said (much abbreviated) there would soon be an attack on Pepe's ministry and on the Bible School where Pepe was doing some teaching at that time, but to trust God to work things out, and that Pastor Teel would help Pepe get through the coming attack. I won't take time and space for the long story, but within a couple of months, a crooked man bribed a crooked judge, the Bible school and land was stolen from Ford Wilson (my friend, who is a lifetime missionary in Mexico) and the Judicial police were looking for five people whose names were on the deed in order to incarcerate them in the Judicial prison. (This was not a good place, and one might languish in said prison for multiple years while one's family was being extorted of all their money.) The five names on the deed included Ford, two of his sons, a lady, and Pepe. They all fled and went into hiding for about three years. During that time, Pastor Teel helped Pepe financially, with prayer and encouragement, and he kept him at his home in Humble periodically.

In due course, God led Pepe to a remote site near Popo, the active volcano, and instructed Pepe to purchase the 14 acre site to start a new Bible school. Pepe did not have a peso, but he obeyed God, and God provided the money. After a time, Pastor Teel came down to the site of the future Bible school. He prayed and received another prophecy. (The plot thickens!) God spoke through Pastor Teel at that time something like this. "I have called you to this land. You will build a Bible school and ministry center here. (At present the ministry includes an orphanage, Bible school, drug rehab center, old folks' home, radio studio, etc.) The word of God will go forth from this site by radio and television. This ministry will touch all of Mexico, Central, and South America, and other places in the world. Be faithful, and I will bring this to pass." At the time, this was a bare piece of ground, and Pepe did not have any money or any way to make money since he was in hiding from the police.

Little by little, with much prayer and sacrifice, the vision has been in process of fulfillment. After several years, Pastor Teel, that humble, faithful little pastor, died of cancer. The pastor who succeeded him did not have a vision for missions and immediately stopped all financial support. Along about that time, God brought me, then Lynne Cumming and Fred Feller on the scene, then John and Henrietta Reed of Sacramento, then Dr. Lance Alexander of Los Angeles. All of these, and my former church in Loveland, and the Vineyard Church here in Grand Junction, and recently a friend and her church in Austin, Texas, have stepped in to fill the gap left by Pastor Teel. Some of these other folks have given sacrificially to help build a radio studio at Alfa and Omega, and to build for Pepe and his wife, Anita, the first nice home they have ever owned. PTL!

As I reported last month, Pepe is expanding into television. Wow! When I think about Pastor Teel's prophecy, it makes the hair stand up on my neck (and the hairs stand up on my head). We (notice the "we." I am slyly drawing you into the net) have the opportunity to be a part of this outreach.

In all seriousness, I do believe this is a God-thing, and this is the beginning of an outreach that will impact nations. They

only need \$10,000 to purchase television equipment. Please pray about helping out. (Also, is God touching you to help with the orphans for six months, more or less? If I don't get volunteers, I may have to put the names of everyone on my mailing list in a hat. If I draw your name, I will let you know.)

QUOTES FROM LARRY RANDOLPH

- Larry's prayer to start his teaching at the conference I attended: "O, Lord, stuff us with the stuff."
- Jesus is saying, "**I AM** doing a new thing." Revival is a Person, not an event.
- A new thing means a fresh thing. Do such things as falling down, laughing, tongues, gold dust offend you? Be careful what offends you, it may be God.
- Everybody knew the Messiah was coming, but they had their own ideas, and most everybody missed it. The church guys (Pharisees and Sadducees) knew the Scripture by memory, but they missed the King of Glory! Cause He came as a baby. They were offended. The angels didn't reveal it to the church guys, but to the Shepherds (Pastors)
- Jesus never used the jargon of the old religion: High Priest, Son of God. He told stories about farmers planting seeds, about a woman losing a coin, about a boy who ran away from home, about good fruit and rotten fruit, and he talked about our Father and how much He loves us.
- On a plane, when someone asks Larry what he does, he tells them he is an inspirational speaker, or a life-coach, or a mentor. "If I told them I'm a Deacon, they would say, 'Whut's zat?' If I told them I speak in tongues, they would think I belonged to a weird cult.
- Joseph told Pharaoh he interpreted dreams, not that he was a prophet. Joseph changed his approach in order to relate to Pharaoh. He didn't try to educate Pharaoh to his Judeo worldview.
- How do you relate to your relatives, neighbors, co-workers?

"ALCOHOL IN MODERATION IS GOOD FOR YOU"

So read the newspaper headline about a long-term study. Let me respond: I doubt it.

First, as you know, statistics can be bogus, slanted, misunderstood, etc. Remember the polls of the primaries in New Hampshire?

Second, it is a statistical fact (not bogus) that just over 8 percent of moderate drinkers go on to become addicted to alcohol, also known as alcoholics, or the biblical word, "drunkards." That is about one out of twelve. No one knows when he starts drinking moderately if he will become a drunkard.

Imagine if someone invited you over to a party of twelve. They said, "We're going to play Russian roulette. It will be great fun. We are going to use two pistols. Each of the pistols holds six cartridges, but the guns will be empty except for one bullet, so you will be perfectly safe." Yes, eleven of you would be safe and enjoy the thrill of the game. But one of you

would blow his brains out.

There are about 23,000 inmates in Colorado prisons. 82 percent of them, according to the Colorado Department of Corrections, have substance abuse problems.

If I remember correctly, over 23,000 annual traffic deaths are ascribed to alcohol or drugs. And over half the murders. And a huge percentage of sexual crimes, including crimes against children.

I would be dishonest if I said the Bible forbids drinking alcohol. It does not. Jesus drank wine, he was accused of being a wine-bibber, he made a big batch of wine at a wedding, and Paul told Timothy to drink a little wine for his stomach. I have friends who drink moderately. That is simply a matter of conscience. I also have friends and relatives who have destroyed their lives and their families with immoderate drinking. Since I had a problem with alcohol addiction, abstinence is a matter of obedience and necessity for me. But I thought I would challenge you to reflect on this subject

INSPIRATIONAL (?) SPEAKER, LIFE-COACH, AND INTERPRETER OF DREAMS GETS HIS OWN WEB-SITE

I'm happy to tell you that my friend Jon James has fixed me up with my very own web-site. It is still in the early stages, but already has several of my teachings, all my 2007 Newsletters, audio of several teachings, and a photo of the ancient gnome in front of his home. The full set of teachings will gradually be added, both written and audio. And Jon said that eventually (if I understood correctly), video teachings will also be provided.

Just Google: glennbrownministries.com

MINISTRY

I'm off to Los Angeles on January 22: attend a conference at Che Ahn's Harvest Rock Church in Pasadena, teach a seminar at Hope for Homeless Youth with Clay Gollither, and visit my daughter Jeannine and family. Please pray for protection and for God's Spirit to show up with His saving, healing, delivering power.

God Bless,

Glenn

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