

## Motive and Ownership

by Russ Gressett

I have run across so many marketplace and entrepreneur oriented believers in these recent years who are being taught by the Holy Spirit Himself some extremely important truths and wisdom that is much different than what we hear in the typical prosperity message today. It is very encouraging to see it and hear it and to realize that God is in control! A particular thread I have noticed in this area seems to wrap itself around the question of motive and the understanding of ownership. As entrepreneurs and stewards of Kingdom businesses, these are two of the most important topics and truths we will ever come to grips with on a personal level.

I am reminded of the Rich Young Ruler in Mathew 19. You remember this young man who approached Jesus to ask the question of *"What must I do to inherit eternal life?"* His problems were (1) his motives and (2) his view of "ownership". In responding to his question, Jesus put before him many of the commandments ... except the first one where his real problem was located. The young entrepreneur quickly professed his sufficiency in keeping all of the commandments Jesus had mentioned. But then Jesus threw him a curve ball and masked the first commandment (you shall have no other God before Me) by saying, "If you want to be perfect, go sell what you have, give to the poor and come follow me." (notice that He didn't say, "Sow it into My ministry."). The young man could not do it. I hope that later he did. I know there have been times where I recognized places in my life where I had said "no" as well ... only to have the mercy and grace of God continue to work on me.

The interesting thing is the discussion that followed as Jesus and the disciples were watching this young entrepreneur make the wrong decision and walk away. It was clear that this young man believed that if he obeyed Jesus he would never be "blessed" again ... it would all be gone forever. This obviously made him sorrowful because he had great possessions the scripture says. However, Jesus never told him he would never "have" again. Jesus never told him it would all be gone forever ... but that is what he heard. What was it that made him hear that in Jesus' question? Because of this young man's view of ownership ("It's mine!"), he couldn't enter into the kingdom of heaven. Because of this young man's view of "I am blessed because of all the good I have done and because of all the commandments I have kept", he did not have the right motive to obey from the heart. He allowed fear to inhibit him from choosing correctly.

Jesus observed and mentioned to His disciples as he walked away that this was a hard thing that the young entrepreneur had failed at ... but that with God all things are possible. Interestingly, He then relayed a story of a landowner in the next chapter (Mathew 20). With this story of the landowner, He was telling them just how possible it was and what this young man's life as a mature SON could

and would look like if he had said "yes" instead of "no" to Jesus' instruction. He would have become a landowner as a member of the Family of God.

If you read this story of the landowner in Matthew 20, all the characteristics of this guy and the way he did business and conducted himself are indications that he went about his life in intimate relationship with the Father ... as a Family member (an owned owner). He did things that were not self serving. He did things that did not necessarily make good business sense. Instead of always wanting a good deal, he gave a good deal. He was good and I believe He knew that the goodness of God draws men unto repentance. At the same time he was steadfast and strong to others when he needed to be ... very much like Jesus on numerous occasions in His earthly ministry.

Losing our lives in order to gain them, especially in the business world for today's entrepreneur, is a tall order. Did you know that the ownership question is exactly why the Bible does not teach much, if any, about the tithe in the New Testament? God did not want to convey to us that He only owned 10% of us. When I hear from someone the statement that, "this part is mine and this part is God's", the question that lingers in my mind is, "But whose are you?" It's only after we truly recognize (as opposed to mentally recognize) that all is His (including ourselves), and make a free will, love motivated choice from the heart to give it all to Him, that we can then HAVE all that is His ... and get this, become landowners as opposed to hirelings.

I remember God speaking as clearly as He has ever spoken to me one morning when I was studying about the tithe. I had seen what the tithe was used for, which was actually a number of things, but primarily for supplying provision to orphans, widows and the priesthood. The conversation that came up in my heart went something like this, "Son, in the Old Testament the tithe was holy unto Me, right? You have seen what I used it for. Well, think about these questions: If you lived back then and were a typical Jewish believer and you made \$10, how much would have been Mine?" I replied, "\$1.00 Lord". He then replied, "OK, now forget about the other \$9.00 and let's concentrate on the \$1.00. How much of that \$1.00 is Mine?" I replied, "All of it, Lord ... 100%." He responded, "What I'd like to ask you is this, 'Why don't you make a choice to become that \$1.00. Would you make a choice to become the tithe yourself?' If you will, I'll be able to use you to do the same thing I used the tithe for in the Old Testament. Namely, to minister to the orphans (those without a father – Me), to widows (those without a husband – Jesus), and to the priesthood (those who actively minister the gospel ... by the way, not limited to "pulpit" ministers)."

Wow! I really had a new perspective. I really understood something about ownership that I had never seen before. I now understood how to divide the Word that in Matthew 6 speaks about the birds that neither sow nor reap but are provided for, but in 2 Corinthians 9 speaks that if you sow sparingly, you'll reap sparingly. It has to do with the attitude and viewpoint of ownership that we take in approaching the Father. If we view our sowing and reaping as "Kingdom sowing and reaping" as opposed to "personal sowing and reaping", it then makes all the

sense in the world. But if we view it as "personal sowing and reaping", we slander the work of the cross and proceed with a wrong base motive (Phil. 4:19, 2 Cor. 8:9).

Ultimately, I saw that giving is ministry ... not an investment tool for ME (Romans 12:8, 2 Corinthians 8:4). Jesus was God's investment tool for me, and His sowing and reaping was more than enough to supply all my needs. I saw that if I continued to look at the instruction that Jesus gave the Rich Young Ruler in Matthew 19 as something that it was not, I would never see it for what it is. I saw what the Macedonian bunch in 2 Corinthians 8 saw. FIRST, they gave themselves to the Lord (became all together His), and then unto Paul's bunch BY THE WILL OF GOD (2 Corinthians 8:5). In other words, they got to a place of understanding ownership and motive. Then, out of intimacy, they began to do that which was instructed by the Father through relationship as opposed to some dry formula. They were a group that had said "yes" to the question that the Rich Young Ruler had said "No" to. Look at how they have been used as a testimony to the Body of Christ for 2000 years!

It's funny (and sad) to me to see the difference this understanding made at that time versus what we see today. This Macedonian bunch implored them with much urgency to receive their ministry of giving. It seems like we have it backwards in today's churches. In our day, it is Paul's bunch that is doing the "implored urgently". Why? It is because of wrong beliefs on all sides ... wrong motives and wrong understanding of ownership. I challenge us (including myself) to change this "backwardness" on our end ... as givers and gospel entrepreneurs and kingdom stewards. Let's not wait for others to "get right" ... we can lead in this area! We are supposed to lead in this area! We are entrepreneurs and business people in the kingdom and for the kingdom ... it's not like we don't understand taking initiative, right? Well, let's do it!

This change is already beginning to sweep over the Body of Christ. I believe it with all my heart. It begins with ownership and motive. The Holy Spirit is operating with a directive from the Father to bring this understanding to full age. As I alluded in the first paragraph, many are seeing the truth, and beginning to proclaim it ... but they are doing so without an agenda to hold someone else up and say "You have been wrong, now repent!!!" Rather, they are doing so out of a motivation of love alone for the Father and the Family. Not for price or reward (Isaiah 45:13).

It is truly an important change. Why, you ask? Well, think of it, what father would enjoy having their children shout with joy from the mountain tops, "My father provides a roof over my head, clothes for my back and food for my stomach only as I give unto him?!!!" I would consider that an insult of the highest order as a father. Dare we continue speaking this via our actions and our beliefs? It is a wake up call for gospel entrepreneurs, for kingdom stewards and for the ministry of kings. Are we listening?

**Prayer:**

***"Father forgive us. We repent. Give us the grace to do a 180 and change. Make us a true blessing. Make us arteries that deliver provision to the Body. Mighty weapons in Your hands Lord. Help us to understand true ownership Father. Help us grow and mature into being motivated by our love for You and love for the Family alone. Amen."***