

# Unit 2



## Generous Living is an Evidence of:

*Your Choice of Investment*

### TRUTH

#### by memory – Matthew 6:19-20 (ESV)

<sup>19</sup>"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, <sup>20</sup>but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal."

#### in Bible –

This week you will read several short passages that deal with stewardship from the perspective of investing in the Kingdom of God and receiving a return. You should also review Philippians 4:10-20, particularly verses 14-17. In these passages you will find (depending on your translation) concepts and words like *giving, treasure, reward, credit* and *account*. You can use a different passage each day for your personal worship. Remember to use **PRAISE** and be sure to think about specific, measurable applications to your life.

#### Philippians 4:14-17

#### Proverbs 3:9-10

#### Matthew 6:19-24

#### Matthew 19:16-30

#### Luke 6:37-38

#### to summarize -

Last week you began a series of four units exploring the meaning of a grace commitment to *stewardship*. Remember, a *grace commitment* is a discipline or commitment that is motivated by the grace of God, rather than an effort to earn God's favor. The first unit dealt with what it means to be

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content with the portion of God's property that He has given you to manage for His Kingdom. This week your study on stewardship deals with the idea of *investing* in God's Kingdom.

Everyone likes a good investment. In fact, people can be pretty enthusiastic about their investment opportunities. Perhaps you've been approached by an enthusiast of this or that stock who tells you, "*You just have to get in on the ground floor of this one!*" Well, maybe you were convinced, maybe not. But, what if there was a bank that paid a guaranteed rate of interest that no other investment could match? Would you be on board? Of course you would, *if it were guaranteed*. Is there such a bank? Metaphorically speaking, there is, and if you are a follower of Christ, you already have an account there in your name!

You will recall from your study in Philippians 4 that Paul wrote to thank the Philippian church for providing for his needs during his imprisonment. His motive for writing was not to encourage them to give more. Though his personal needs were certainly important to him, his greater concern was to ensure them that their giving was not lost or wasted. "*Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account.*" (Philippians 4:17 NAS) In writing this, Paul used two words from the financial arena to describe how God would keep a record of their generosity: *profit*, which was used to mean results, produce, dividends, or interest; and *account*, which some versions translate as *credit*. So, Paul was telling the Philippians that God was keeping a record of their support for Paul and crediting their giving to their own eternal accounts.

Know this – if you are a follower of Christ, then the moment you became a Christian, an account was opened in your name (so to speak) in the First Bank of Heaven. Christians who understand the guaranteed return on investing in this account become very enthusiastic about giving to the Kingdom of God. Not that anyone ever earns their way into heaven with this account; entrance to heaven is a gift of grace. Rather, this account was opened for you as another benefit of the grace of God so that none of your good works as a Christian (including giving) would ever be lost.

Another important thing for you to remember is that deposits are made into your account every time you give to God's Kingdom with good motives. When are you giving to God's Kingdom? – Anytime you give to that which puts Christ first and advances His reign on the earth. It could be the tithes and offerings you contribute to your own Church, or the contributions you send to relief or outreach missions in your community and around the world, or even the gifts you share in the name of Christ with someone you know who is in need. When you give with the intent to advance God's Kingdom, to make His Glory and fame greater in the world, your investment will be secure for eternity. "*...but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.*" (Matthew 6:20 ESV)

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In fact, not only will you not lose your investment, but God will pay excessively high dividends on every deposit you make. The word *increase* in Philippians 4:17 literally means *to accrue excessively so as to reach overflowing proportions*. You read several other passages this week that also teach this truth. Here are some examples:

*"Honor the LORD with your wealth...then your barns will be filled with plenty."* (Proverbs 3:9-10 ESV)

*"And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life."* (Matthew 19:29 ESV)

*"Give and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap."* (Luke 6:38 ESV)

Unfortunately, verses like this have been wrongly interpreted in recent times so that many people believe if you give a \$100 bill to God, God promises you \$10,000 in return. But this teaching (called Prosperity Theology) is clearly contradictory to the whole of Scripture. It wrongly focuses on *lifestyle*, whereas God's promises focus on the prosperous *life* in Christ that Christians experience both now and in eternity (see John 10:10, and 3 John 1:2). As you follow Christ and develop the generous habits of a faithful steward of God's kingdom, God will bless and prosper your life in many ways, but prosperity of lifestyle may or may not be included in His blessing. So, your focus should be on God's kingdom, God's glory, and your eternal investment.

Perhaps you haven't thought of giving to God's Kingdom as an investment before? Maybe you've thought of giving as a tax write-off at best or a waste of hard earned wages at worst? Not if God's Word is true and dependable. The verses you studied this week describe supporting the Kingdom of God as an investment that is guaranteed to yield extraordinary, eternal dividends in which not one penny is wasted. Your earthly needs will be met plentifully, your treasures will be secure for eternity, and you will receive an eternal return on your investment.

So, in regards to your choice of investment, the question is, do you believe God? Do you really believe that eternal rewards are of far greater worth than any temporal investment? If so, your faith will be evidenced by a grace commitment to enthusiastic, generous investment in His Kingdom. But, just as many are more content with abundance than with having little; so also, many are more enthusiastic about investing in this life than in the Kingdom of God. What about you? How will you respond to this truth? Will you reevaluate your financial priorities in light of your eternal investment opportunities?

#### **online –**

Remember to visit <http://perimeter-adult.followers.net/Discipleship.Curriculum> for this week's downloadable audio, video, or print resources.

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## EQUIPPING

Review Matthew 6:19-24. Jesus is teaching on the financial implications of belonging to the Kingdom of God. Write a few sentences to answer this question: Regardless of your income, assets, or debts, what is your financial responsibility as a steward of God's Kingdom. (Try to be more specific than "to put God first.")

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Take a few minutes to look through your financial records for the last month. Imagine you were an independent auditor researching the question, "What is this person investing in?" What would that independent auditor write in a report about you?

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Assuming you have a desire to be a steward who generously invests in God's Kingdom, what do you think is holding you back? Is it bad financial habits? A lack of faith? Poor planning? Overwhelming debt? Misguided values? Write a few sentences describing what holds you back and what you think God would need to do for you (or in you) in order to become the steward you want to be.

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