

Healing from the Spirit of Poverty

Most of the world lives in poverty. In many countries, it's a way of life which has embedded itself within the culture, and it has remained that way for as many generations as anyone can remember. Poverty permeates the mindsets and the attitudes of the people. Unfortunately, they know no other way. Living in poverty is accepted and expected; it becomes a generational trend within a poverty culture. Regrettably, most Christians do not realize that Jesus' death on the cross provided not only for the forgiveness of our sins and for healing from our sicknesses, but additionally for **healing from poverty**.

Take into consideration the following scriptures: "*For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, for your sakes he became poor, **that ye through His poverty might be rich***"—2 Cor. 8:9, and, "*Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to [in order that we might] receive power, **and riches... and blessing***"—Rev. 5:12*. Jesus has paid the price that we might be "rich."

One of the biggest limitations to receiving God's abundance in our lives is the lack of understanding and acknowledgment that **blessings of prosperity are one of the reasons Jesus died for us on the cross**. We have no problem believing He died for our sins. And many accept as well that He died for our healing (of body, mind and spirit). Why, then, do we have a problem believing He died to free us from a state of poverty? Again, realize that Jesus died for... (1) our sins (salvation), (2) our sicknesses (healing of body, mind and spirit), and (3) our finances (our fiscal needs).

Likewise, Jesus' death on the cross atoned for the "**curse of poverty**." Take notice below of how this fact is revealed in Scripture:

- He hadn't eaten in over 24 hours (Hunger)
- He was thirsty ("I thirst") (Thirst)
- He had nothing and was stripped of his cloak (Nakedness)
- He had no burial place (In need)

Unfortunately most Christians do not realize that, as a child of the King and an heir to His promises, we are entitled to the financial blessings afforded us because of the cross.

The first step in healing from the curse or "**spirit of poverty**" is to understand and accept that just as there are two kingdoms at work in the struggle for our souls (the Kingdom of Darkness and the Kingdom of Light), the same two kingdoms are likewise at work in the area of our finances. These opposing kingdoms include the earthly kingdom of **Mammon** (or the pull of the culture—characterized by need, lack, deprivation, hunger, insufficiency, fear and poverty) in contrast to God's heavenly economy of **Abundance**—the mind and heart of God (characterized by abundance, plenty, peace, sufficiency and trust).

Mammon Economy

Mammon (or the world's) economy is based upon credit, debt, want, prestige, desire for prosperity, financial stress, worry, fear, greed and covetousness, which are forms of idolatry.

God hates idolatry in any and all of its forms. **Idolatry** is the act of putting someone or something in a higher place of value and respect than where we place God. Note that the first three commandments

*Unless otherwise noted, Biblical references are taken from the King James Version.

(see Ex. 20) are direct cautions against idolatry. Eph. 5:5 explicitly informs us, “*For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.*”

Money is the chief rival god, as the use of money for greed, covetousness and/or hoarding is contrary to God’s design of sharing, giving and generosity. Greed refers to the desire for extravagant (unnecessary and selfish) wealth and covetousness (in this Biblical context) refers to having an excessive and unregulated (undisciplined) envy with regard to things that do not belong to us. God takes greed and covetousness very seriously. *Mamona* is an Aramaic term for wealth. The NIV of the Bible capitalizes “Money” or Mammon because it is a proper name. Mammon is a spiritual person in the demonic world. Mammon produces the “*spirit of poverty*.” Covetousness and greed are characteristics in allegiance to the false god named Mammon.

In Scripture, when Jesus mentioned Mammon, it was in the context of not being able to serve two masters. Serving any supernatural master (like Mammon) in the demonic world is considered hard-core idolatry. Satan wants us to be in bondage to and to serve the “*spirit of poverty*.” Recall the rich young ruler (in Mat. 19:16-22) who came to Jesus and asked what he needed to do in order to inherit eternal life. When Jesus answered him, telling him to sell all that he had and to give to the poor..., Scripture says, “*he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.*” This passage points out the rich young ruler’s lack—his attachment to wealth (Mammon) being greater than his attachment to God.

Consider also the following attributes of **poverty**.

- Poverty is a tormentor.
- Poverty creates a climate of hopelessness where seeds of suicide grow.
- Poverty strips a man or a woman of their self-confidence and sense of worth.
- Poverty blurs and diminishes visions and dreams.
- Poverty is where the seeds of anger and cynicism grow.
- Poverty is slavery (and financial captivity is unnatural).
- The “*spirit of poverty*” will make you critical of those who are trying to set you free.
- Poverty will make you question the truth about God, who is your true Source and Provider.
- Poverty births fear, and fear makes you want to hoard—which cuts off supply.
- Poverty is not merely a financial circumstance of your life, it is **a spiritual condition of your heart and soul**.
- Poverty is a spirit to be cast out. “*The Lord is ... my deliverer ...*”—Ps. 18:2.
- Poverty is an enemy to be destroyed.

Poverty is a curse (see Deut. 28:15, and chapter 30) and was a result of Adam’s sin. However, Christ’s death on the cross met the demands of justice for the cancellation of the curse of poverty (as exemplified in the Scriptural passage which notes “mercy triumphs over justice”).

God’s Heavenly Economy of Abundance

Unfamiliar to most, God’s economy has unlimited resources. Within God’s economy, there is no want or lack. God’s economy is characterized by sufficiency, plenty, abundance and feelings of peace, contentment and trust. Lovingly, God’s economy makes the problems of the economy of Mammon disap-

pear. Recognize that **God does His part when we do our part**. Consider the following characteristics of **God's heavenly economy**:

1. **God has infinite resources**—and as His heirs, all these resources are available to us. For example:
 - Ex. 16—in the wilderness, the Israelites were fed **manna for 40 years**
 - 1 Ki. 17:8-16—Elijah and the widow; her oil and meal did not waste, “until” ...
 - 2 Ki. 4:1-7—Elisha's counsel to the widow; one pot of oil filled many—the oil was sold and the widow's debt was paid
 - 1 Chr. 29:3-28—David, although born a poor peasant, gave untold wealth to build the temple, recognizing and acknowledging “*all things come of thee*” (vs. 14)
 - Mat. 14:15-21—Jesus fed 5000 men with 5 loaves and 2 fishes
 - Mat. 15:32-38—Jesus fed 4000 men with 7 loaves and “a few little fishes,” with 7 full baskets left over
 - Mat. 17:24-27—Peter and the coin in the fish
 - Luke 5:1-11—Simon Peter casts his net on the other side, and the net almost broke for the abundance of the weight of fish he caught

2. **God multiplies rather than adds**—In the Mammon economy, 5-10% interest is considered good. Compare this interest with the manifold returns God promises us:
 - Gen. 26:12—Isaac was blessed 100-fold
 - Gen. 30:27-30—Laban acknowledges the increase of his cattle was because of Jacob's favor with the Lord
 - Mat. 13:12 and Mark 4:8—an increase of 30, 60, or 100-fold; “*For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance....*”
 - Other Scriptures which promise manifold increases: Mat. 19:29 and Mark 10:28-30.

Our part in sharing in God's heavenly economy is, **FIRST**, to **make a choice, a commitment and a promise to follow God's plan rather than man's plan**—that is, to pursue financial freedom and blessings rather than financial foolishness, as in the admonition in Deut. 11:26, “*Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse....*” Also, “... *I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore, choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live*”—Deut. 30:19 and vs. 15 (also Jos. 24:15). And, as Mat. 6:24 warns, “*No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other*”—**we must choose**. We cannot simultaneously operate in the Mammon economy and in God's abundant economy. **SECONDLY**, we must meet the conditions He has stated in His Scriptures for receiving the blessings He has promised.

I. What the Scriptures Say about Money

1. **The Scriptures say more about money, possessions and stewardship than about any other subject.** Consider the following:
 - 16 of the 38 parables Jesus told were about money or possessions.
 - Jesus spoke more about money than He did about heaven and hell (combined).
 - 10% of the Gospels, a full 288 verses, deal with money and possessions.

- Within the Scriptural passages of the Bible, there are
 - 500 verses on prayer
 - less than 500 verses on faith
 - over 2300 verses on money, possessions and stewardship

There are at least four notable explanations why money and material possessions were a constant theme in Jesus' teachings.

- a) How we handle our money impacts our relationship and fellowship with God. In Jesus' parable in Luke 16:11, He admonishes, "*If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?*" This passage speaks to the truth that we will never be able to serve God to our fullest potential until we are faithful in dealing with Mammon.
- b) Possessions compete with the Lord—and His will and work—for mastery of our lives. Yet God desires His will to be the first priority of our lives. He wants no other idols to occupy any of our time or attention or acts of worship.
- c) Much of life revolves around the use of money. Fortunately, God has adequately prepared us for this undertaking by giving us the Scriptures as our guideline for living.
- d) Money and material possessions are the last area of our lives we surrender to God (as in the parable of the rich young ruler—Mat. 19:16-22, and as in our final departure from this life).

2. **The Scriptures Promise Prosperity to the Obedient.** While blessings and curses are direct opposites, they have several things in common. They are words pronounced, decreed or written in the Bible with spiritual power and authority for good (blessings) or for evil (curses). Blessings are mentioned 221 times in the Bible; curses are mentioned 230 times. Some examples of promised blessings of abundance follow:

Blessings mentioned within Deut. 28:1-14 (and curses follow in vs. 15-68)

- We will be "*set on high above all nations of the earth.*"
- We will experience blessings "*in the city*" and "*in the field;*" "*when we come in*" and "*when we go out.*"
- Blessed shall be the fruit of our body.
- Blessed shall be the fruit (produce) of our ground.
- Blessed shall be the offspring (increase) of our cattle and herds.
- Blessed shall be our "*basket*" (a large container used to store items—i.e., fruit or agricultural products) and "*store*" (a kneading trough, used at home for storage and for the preparation of foods, particularly bread).
- Blessed shall be our storehouses.
- Blessed shall be anything we set our hand to do.
- Our enemies will be smitten before our faces and shall flee before us.
- The Lord shall make us plenteous in goods.
- The Lord shall open to us His good treasure (rain in due season, etc.).
- We shall lend to many nations, and not borrow; the Lord shall make us the head and not the tail; we shall be above and not beneath these nations.

Blessings mentioned within Deut. 8:5-18—We are promised:

- To eat bread without scarceness and lack nothing
- The building of goodly houses
- The multiplying of herds and flocks
- The multiplying of silver and gold
- The multiplying of all that we have

Blessings mentioned within Mal. 3:8-12 (if we bring the “tithes into the storehouse”)

- God will open to us the windows of heaven
- God will pour us out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it
- God will rebuke the devourer for our sakes
- The devourer shall not destroy the fruits of our ground
- Our vine shall not cast her fruit before the time in the field
- All nations shall call us blessed

Other Scriptures Promising Abundance

- Jos. 1:8 *“... thou shalt ... for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shall have good success.”*
- Ps. 34:10 *“... they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.”*
- Ps. 84:11 *“... no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.”*
- Is. 1:19 *“If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land....”*
- 2 Cor. 8:9 *“For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.”*
- Phi. 4:19 *“But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”*
- 3 John 2 *“Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.”*

From the above scriptural passages it should be obvious that God’s plan and intention for his people is abundance. There is nothing sacred or desirous about being poor. Being poor is a curse that must be broken; poverty is a “spirit” to be delivered from. Poverty is overcome by generosity. I am sure there are those in Africa who have questioned whether or not the African Bible reads the same as Western Bibles in this regard. Individuals in the West seem to be able to more readily realize the promises of abundance than those in Africa, but I assure you that both Bibles read the same.

God made the same promises to Africans that He made to Westerners. God does not lie. The good news is that God has a plan to release you from the “spirit of poverty” and into the realm of abundance. He has a divine plan for managing your finances. The principles of this plan are contained in the Scriptures. This study is intended to help you better understand and prac-

tice, or apply, the principles of that plan. To gain the most from your effort, commit now to read every Scripture listed. While the promised results may not occur overnight, the ultimate blessings are assured.

Let's begin with the foundational teachings for how God wants us to think about and use money.

II. Foundational Teachings of Managing Your Finances

There are **seven foundational principles** on which God's plan for our finances is based. These divine principles are Scriptural concepts which need to be understood, accepted and applied, in order for the promised blessings to occur.

1. **God Created Everything**—In the beginning there was nothing; God created everything (Gen. 1). You and I were born with “nothing” and will leave this world with “nothing.” We need to recognize and appreciate that God gave us everything we have. All we possess is His, not ours; instead, **we are users, managers and stewards**, but not owners.
2. **God Owns Everything**—Everything that is created is owned by God. While we may consider our possessions as being exclusively “ours,” this belief is a misconception shared by our current culture, and it is the root of the problem we face in our attempt to manage money God's way. As identified in Scripture, God owns:
 - The earth Ps. 24:1
 - All the gold and silver Hag. 2:8
 - All that is in heaven and earth 1 Chr. 29:11
 - The land Lev. 25:23
 - The cattle on a thousand hills Ps. 50:10
 - Other scriptures affirming God's ownership include:

Ex. 9:29	Deut. 8:18	Deut. 10:14
1 Chr. 29:12	Ps. 24:1	1 Cor. 10:26
3. **We Are Stewards/Managers/Trustees**—Flowing out of the fact that God created and owns everything is the logical conclusion that whatsoever we possess is not really ours but is God's; we are simply entrusted with earthly possessions. We are not owners; we are stewards/managers/trustees.

Trustees have no rights; instead, trustees have responsibilities. To be successful in implementing God's plan, we need to develop a steward's mindset. Review the following insights, which verify our role as steward/manager/trustee and to God's role as owner:

 - The Parable of the Tenants (or Vineyard; Mat. 21:33-46 and Mark 12:1-12)
 - Culturally and historically, the Israelites respected God as owner; the concept of individual ownership came out of Rome.
 - 1 Cor. 4:2, *“Moreover, it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.”*
4. **God Gives To Each According To His Plan**—Besides being creator and owner, God is ultimately in control of every event that occurs upon the earth. He is God of the universe, of nations and of each of us as individuals. According to Scripture, He “establishes” nations and

kings and “removes” them at His will. In addition, He gives us resources according to His individual plan for us. Scriptural passages to review include:

- Is. 40:15-26—God controls nations
- Mat. 25:14-30—the Parable of the Talents
- 1 Chr. 29:12—“*riches and honor come of thee, and thou reignest over all*”
- Deut. 8:18—it is God that giveth the power to get wealth...
- Dan. 2:21,44—God sets up and deposes kings

We must learn to be content with God’s provision (as Paul confessed—“*Not that I speak in respect of want; for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content*”—Phi. 4:11), to be content with our present level of abundance. Contentment is mentioned seven times in the entire Bible, and in six of those seven times it relates to money. Additionally, within the **curse**s noted in Deut. 28:47-48, we discover the importance of having an attitude of being a “cheerful receiver”: “*Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things, Therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the Lord shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things: and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, **until** he have destroyed thee.*”

5. Scripture Mentions Three Levels of provision —Notwithstanding God gives to each according to His plan, there are three “levels of provision” mentioned in the Bible. His plan is for us to be in sufficiency or abundance. Where do you presently find yourself?

- In Poverty—in need, naked, hungry, thirsty
- In Sufficiency—have enough, but none to spare
- In Abundance/Prosperity—enough and to spare (notice, this is not the same as being “wealthy”)

We have mentioned previously that Jesus atoned for the “curse of poverty” on the cross. God’s promise of abundance will not move you from poverty to prosperity in a moment of time. It takes time and effort to store His words in our heart. Even so—as promised in Jer. 31:33—He writes His words (law) on our heart: “... *I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.*” Or, as also stated in Heb. 10:16, “... *I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them....*” (See also Jos. 1:8, “*This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.*”)

It takes time and effort to become a good manager over what God has provided. Remember, too, that God is not a heavenly ATM machine from which you can withdraw cash whenever you need it, as He oftentimes will “prove” you—or first give you a little amount to see how you manage your allotment of money.

6. God Wants You to Have “Finances” in Order to (while the primary reason God wants you to have abundance is because He loves His children, there are other reasons, as identified below)—

- Provide for the needs of your own family and household (1 Tim. 5:8)
- Complete your current and progressing assignments

- Assist in sending ministers, evangelists, etc., throughout the world to preach the gospel (Rom. 10:15)
- Pay your taxes to your government and your obligations to God (Mat. 22:21)
- Return tithe back to God's house—for the work of the Lord (Lev. 27:30)
- Give good gifts to your children and to those you love (Mat. 7:11)
- Give to others who need to complete their assignments
- Increase your giving to help the poor (Pro. 11:24-26, 19:17 and 28:27)
- Solve any emergency or crisis that arises (Eccl. 10:19b)
- Dream dreams big enough for you, your family and others—dreams which require the supernatural intervention of God

7. **God Blesses the Obedient**—One of the fundamental principles about “blessings” most overlooked in the Bible is that of **conditional promises**. Bible scholars list some 635 promised blessings for us as individuals. Without exception, ALL of them are conditional. That is, the Lord promises us that He will do something (blessing) **if** we will do something first (obedience).

Take, for example, the promise of salvation. While Jesus died on the cross for all, the promise of salvation is conditional upon us: *“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved”*—Rom. 10:9. Thus “all” are not “recipients” of Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross, until they first do their part as provided in Rom. 10:9 above.

Take another example—that of being “born again.” Note the specified “condition” which comes before the promise: *“Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God”*—John 3:5. Thus, all are not born again until they are born of water and of the Spirit.

The same holds true of the promises and blessings given for a life of abundance. We cannot expect to receive the promises until we meet the conditions God has put forth in His Word. If we are disobedient, we have no promise and in many cases bring upon ourselves, instead, a curse.

The Bible lists 37 groups of “sins of disobedience” that result in cursing. Consistently, according to God’s plan, these curses are not removed without repentance and obedience. *“But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee”*—Deut. 28:15 (see also Deut. 8:10-20; 27:15-26 and 28:15-68).

Because the blessings mentioned in Scripture are conditional, they are only attainable by those who are obedient. There are no such promises for those who are disobedient; in fact, curses are what are promised. If you want what God has – you must do what God says.

III. Conditions Required for Receiving the Blessings and Promises of Abundance

Let’s consider several conditions noted in Scripture for receiving the blessings and promises of

abundance:

1. **Paying Your Tithes and Making Offerings**—Paying tithing is not an option; Deut. 14:22 **commands** us to tithe. We must understand, acknowledge and live by the fact that, besides being “holy,” the tithe is the Lord’s (Lev. 27:30). In essence, it is our heavenly “rent” for the space we occupy and the possessions the Lord allows us to use. It is a debt and it belongs to God.

If you tithe, God will bless you and will “*open the windows of heaven*” for you. If you don’t tithe, your finances will be cursed and the devourer will destroy your fruits. It’s that simple. Mal. 3:10 is the only verse in Scripture which tells us to “*prove*” (test) God.

Consider the following about the tithe:

- “Giving” of tithes and offerings is the only real evidence of love (as witnessed in John 3:16)
- The act of paying tithe is evidence we have conquered greed.
- If we do not pay our tithe, we are robbing God of what is rightfully His (Mal. 3). The payment of tithe and “*heave offerings*” was recognition of Israel’s subjection to God—that He owned them and all they had. To withhold the tithe is to renounce the sovereign authority of God, which is to be guilty of the same sin as Lucifer’s (in the beginning).
- The act of paying tithe breaks the financial curse which is over our life and our family (Mal. 3).
- The act of paying tithe is acknowledgment of our belief and trust in God.

Let’s review what the Old Testament reveals concerning tithe:

Tithing in the Old Testament (OT)

While we generally consider the “tithe” to be 10%, there were at least three tithes commanded by God and several “festival” celebrations (which normally lasted 7 days) wherein additional offerings were required, as noted below:

- **A First Tithe** (Gen. 14:17-24)—Abraham first gave tithes to Melchizedek; he did not take the spoils. Several Scriptures identify that the Israelites were commanded to tithe a tenth of all their **increase** (Lev. 27:30 and 32; Deut. 14:22)
- **A Levite Tithe** (Num. 18:21-24)—also considered a “*heave offering*” (vs. 24), the Levite tithe was given to support the Levites, who in turn gave a tenth to the priests
- **A Welfare Tithe** (Deut. 26:12-13)—was required every three year’s; it was a “*poor man’s tithe*”
- **The Feast of Unleavened Bread** (Ex. 12:17)—in remembrance of the Passover
- **A Feast of Weeks (Harvest)** (Ex. 23:16 and Deut. 16:10)—a first-fruits offering given in remembrance of—and honoring—God, who gave the harvest
- **Feast of Trumpets of New Moon** (Ps. 81:3)—a reminder of the mighty voice of God
- **Feast of the Day of Atonement** (Lev. 23:27-28 and Num. 29:12)—a celebration of the covering for sins
- **Feast of Tabernacles** (Lev. 23:34 and Deut. 16:13-14)—celebrated at the end of the year when all of the labors of the field had been gathered in

Biblical scholars have calculated that these individual tithes and offerings account for a total yearly amount of 23.3%. Within this group of tithes and offerings, we see that these required gifts were much more like a “tax,” in that this directive was not “voluntary.”

Let’s now review the conditions noted in Mal. 3:8-11: *“Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. (9) Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. (10) Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. (11) And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts.”*

Although God is herein speaking to the nation of Israel, we know that all Scripture is given for the profit of mankind (noted in 2 Tim. 3:16, *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness”*). Therefore, in this Scriptural passage (Mal. 3:8-11), God is also speaking to us, communicating principles which are to be guides for a keeper or custodian (a manager or a trustee). Briefly, God is expressing the pronouncement that if you have not paid your tithing nor consistently made offerings, you have robbed God, and are under a curse (namely, He will leave the devourer at your door). This curse is a disobedience curse, and no amount of prayer by anyone will release you from this curse (for more on Disobedience Curses, refer to this chapter in *Healing of the Spirit*). The only course of release from this curse is obedience (i.e. “paying” your tithes and “making” your offerings consistently). After God proclaims we have robbed Him, He tells us in vs. 10 how to rectify our sin: *“Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse...”* (Note that Mal. 3:9 is the only place in the Bible where God says *“prove”* [test] me.)

Yet look at the numerous blessings promised to those who are obedient in Mal. 3:10-11: *“... open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. (11) ... I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time.”* What a promise! Unfortunately, most Christians (including many African pastors) either don’t pay tithing at all or pay it infrequently. It should be no surprise, then, that those who do not pay their tithe are suffering from poverty. And they will continue to suffer in this way until they begin to faithfully pay and return to God that which is rightfully His. If you want to observe the blessings that can result from paying tithe, refer to the incident recorded in 2 Chr. 31:7-12. In my experience, I have never found a person who, after beginning to tithe and experiencing the blessings and benefits of it, ever quit. God will bless you far beyond your tithe; and every time you increase your tithe, He blesses you more in return.

Let it be sufficiently said that tithing is what belongs to God for the space you occupy on the earth—“rent” for the use of what He has given you. Although the giving of offerings is optional; the giving of tithing is not. It’s all His. God wants increase (Remember the Parable of the Talents?); He wants to be paid. If He is, you are blessed. If He isn’t, you are cursed. It’s as simple as that. He is very jealous of what is His. When you input the tithing due to God into the Mammon economy, God gets upset, just as you would be upset if you were owed funds from someone who refused to pay you, but who instead spent it on other things.

2. **Give a “firstfruits” offering** (“first-fruits:” the first grain or fruit harvested each year—

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considered sacred and offered to God in thanksgiving and celebration in a special ceremony held on the Day of First-fruits)

Pro. 3:9-10 encourages us to, *“Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.”* God requires that we give our tithes and offerings first before we pay anything else; this is why it is referred to as “first-fruits.” If we wait until the end of the month to contribute, there is seldom enough money (or goods) left; then we are giving our “leftovers.” If we pay our tithes and offerings at the time we receive an income, honoring God first, there will always be enough to pay for our necessities.

<u>Scriptures Requiring our First-fruits</u>	<u>Scriptures Identifying Promised Blessings of Obedience</u>
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Ex. 22:29 and 23:19

Lev. 23:10-11

Num. 18:12

Deut. 18:4 and 26:2

Neh. 10:35-37 and 12:44

2 Chr. 31:5-8 (so leaders can be encouraged)

Neh. 13:31 (so the Lord will remember you)

Pro. 3:9-10 (so thy barns be filled with plenty)

Ez. 20:40-41 and 44:30 (for *“the blessing of peace to rest in thine house”*)

3. **Give to the poor**—Consider the following Scriptures which command us to provide for the poor. The poor and widows hold a special place with God. He blesses those that provide for them.

- Deut. 15:7-11 Commandment to give to thy poor and needy brethren.
- Ps. 41:1-3 *A blessing for considering the poor.*
- Prov. 19:17 *“He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.”*
- Prov. 21:13 *“Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard.”*
- Prov 22:22-23 *“Rob not the poor, because he is poor: neither oppress the afflicted in the gate....”*
- Prov. 28:27 *“He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack: but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse.”*
- Prov. 29:7 *“The righteous considereth the cause of the poor: but the wicked regardeth not to know it.”*
- Ez. 16:49 One of the causes of Sodom’s destruction was not giving to the poor.

4. **GIVE—We will reap what we sow**—In addition to providing for the poor, for widows and orphans, God gives us the opportunity to give ... and to reap bountifully if we do.

- Luke 6:38—*“Give, and it shall be given unto you; ... running over....”*
- Pro. 11:25—*“The liberal soul shall be made fat....”*
- 2 Cor. 9:6—*“... He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.”*
- 2 Cor. 9:10—He shall *“multiply your seed sown.”*

God’s principle of abundance is based upon the concept of sowing in faith and reaping financial blessings. There is another principle teaching called **“seed faith.”** Space, does not

allow a full discussion here, but the following are principles of that teaching.

- God commanded everything He created to multiply and become more (Gen. 1:11, 20 and 22).
- Something within you requires increase.
- Every seed contains a seemingly invisible instruction to reproduce more of its own kind.
- When you let go (plant) of the seed in your hand, God will let go of what is in His hand.
- A little seed can birth a huge harvest.
- When you keep what is in your hand, God will keep what is in His hand.
- When you increase the size of your seed-planting, you increase the size of your harvest (2 Cor. 9:6).
- A seed never planted guarantees a season of no harvest.
- Everything you have is a seed; if you keep it, that is your harvest.
- No one else can sow your seed for you.
- When you give your seed a specific assignment, incredible faith is unleashed (1 Ki. 17:13-16).
- Recognize the seed (gift, skill, talent, time, love, money) you have already received from God and thank Him for it (obeying the Law of Thankfulness).
- Thankfulness is a force, a law of the universe; without gratitude you do not harvest.
- Time is currency on earth and can produce what money cannot buy.
- There is a time for planting seeds; if the planting time is missed, so is the harvest.
- Sow what you have been given, and don't complain that you don't have more.
- When you sow, wrap your faith around your seed. Your **seed** is *what* God multiplies: but your **faith** is *why* He multiplies it.
- God does not recognize need; He only recognizes faith.
- "Seed-faith" is the process of sowing what you have been given, in order to create something else that you have been promised.
- "*...with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again*"— Luke 6:38.
- Asking is the key to receiving (Mat. 7:7-8 and Jam. 4:2-3).
- Faith requires an instruction—something specific (an amount or a result).
- When you make a seed faith promise, you've entered into a covenant between you and God. Don't ever be a promise-breaker with God.
- Crisis is the place of miracles, but "fear" gets in the way. (FEAR: false evidence appearing real)
- Waiting is the forgotten (but powerful) season between sowing and reaping.
- Some of the greatest blessings come after the longest waiting.
- If you dig up your seed to re-examine it because of impatience, there may not be any harvest.
- The size of your seed determines the size of your harvest.
- Save the tithe from Satan; either it is given to God or it will be collected by Satan.
- Until a Christian has experienced freedom in the area of money, he will never experience God's total plan for his life.
- Your tongue determines your harvest. You reap what you speak (Jam. 3:3-6).

For more on “seed faith,” refer to *31 Reasons People Do Not Receive Their Financial Harvest*, *The Covenant of 58 Blessings*, or *7 Keys to 1000 Times More* (Mike Murdock, P.O. Box 99, Denton, TX 76202; 1-888-947-3661; www.thewisdomcenter.tv), or *Seed-Faith 2000* by Oral Roberts (at Amazon.com).

5. As a steward, be a good manager and/or trustee of God’s possessions—(“*Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful*”—1 Cor. 4:2.)

Possession is not necessarily ownership. If we believe God owns it all, then we must accept our role and part as managers and stewards. Review the parable of the vineyard (Mark 12:1-9 and Luke 20:9-16). When we acknowledge God’s ownership, every spending decision becomes a spiritual decision. Good stewards will:

- a) Live by the 10-10-80 rule. From their income, good stewards will pay 10% tithing as their first-fruits, they’ll save 10% and they’ll live on the remaining 80%.
- b) Keep good records of their income and expenses.
- c) Not borrow and make every effort to live debt-free. The Mammon economy is based upon credit and debt. While Scripture does not call debt a sin, “**surety**”—or the taking on of an obligation to pay, without a certain way to repay—is seriously discouraged (refer to Prov. 11:15, 17:18 and 22:26-27). Borrowing is authorized only for items that appreciate and are always worth more than what you owe on them, such as houses. We are, however, in financial bondage when we are in debt and are not entirely free to do what the Lord wants us to do because of our indebtedness. Debt may delay God’s plan for your life; it can also disrupt spiritual growth. Review the following passages:
 - Deut. 15:6 and 28:12 “... *thou shalt not borrow...*”
 - Prov. 22:7 “*The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.*”
 - Rom. 13:8 “*Owe no man anything...*”
- d) Limit spending to needs and “just” wants. The Mammon economy is driven by satisfying our wants and desires (not only “just” or fair wants but all things “unjust” and extravagant as well). Functioning within God’s economy is accomplished by making careful choices and decisions about the difference between our needs and our “just” wants and desires (as in 1 Tim. 6:8). Our focus should be to discipline ourselves to manage our surplus in a manner designed of God.
- e) Ask God before you spend or invest in a business. If you do not have the funds to do what you want to do, perhaps the Lord is telling you to wait. If you feel the Lord is speaking to you about investing in a business, seek sound counsel during your pursuit of this endeavor. Ask for the advice of at least two witnesses or individuals before you proceed. Make sure it is God who is telling you to continue—not something from your own spirit.

6. Faithfulness in Little—Luke 16:10-12 counsels us: “*He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been*

faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?"

One of the reasons you may not have abundance is because God cannot yet trust you with heavenly abundance. Before God will allow you to be His manager over the riches of heaven, you will need to show God you are a good manager/steward/trustee of the unrighteous mammon within your possession, as indicated in the following passage: *"And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath. But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more"*—Luke 12:42-48.

Several scriptures require us to be good stewards. We are God's "agents." An agent is one who acts on behalf of the wishes of an owner. The way you spend your money is an indication of your relationship (faithful or foolish) with God.

IV. Curses of Witchcraft, Traditional Medicines and Family Celebrations

In many African cities, experience has proven that the curse of poverty comes about as the result of believers being directly subjected to the dark spirits of witchcraft, of traditional medicines, of family celebrations (demonic in nature), of polygamy, and of immorality—or believers are the recipient of generational curses such as the cultural "spirit of pauper" that are passed down through the family line (from an ancestor's exposure to these dark spirits).

Steps for obtaining spiritual freedom (as listed in *Healing of the Spirit*) should be followed—first achieving release from these spirits (noted in the previous paragraph) before deliverance from the curse of poverty is addressed. Even if the believer complies with the promises to receive the "spirit of provision," there may yet be no breakthrough if there are still curses remaining from previous exposure to witchcraft, traditional medicines, family celebrations, polygamy or immorality. Until all these curses are broken, and there is freedom from these dark spirits, the "spirit of provision" is not able to enter. The order of this process is very important.

In preparation for a seminar in Zambia in 2010, as I was solemnly praying about the "curse of poverty" over Africa, the Lord revealed to me that the "spirit of poverty" must be prayed against in the same way that other spirits of darkness are prayed against. Namely, through (1) confession, (2) repentance, (3) removal of any existing spiritual permission previously given to the "spirit of poverty" and giving permission for possession back to Jesus, and finally, (4) commanding the spirit(s) to leave.

Pray the following prayer only after prayers for freedom from witchcraft, traditional medicines, family celebrations and polygamy have been successfully offered.

Prayer for Release from the Curse of Poverty

Lord Jesus, I come before You now to be delivered from the “curse of poverty.” I confess that I’ve regrettably traded the value of the Kingdom of Heaven for the desires of my heart in the form of earthly treasures.

Lord, I repent for worrying about life, food and clothing. I repent for laying-up treasures on earth where moths and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal. Lord, I repent for loving money, for serving Mammon (the dark spirit of riches), for greed and for covetousness—all forms of idolatry.

I repent of the belief that money is the answer to everything lacking in my life. I repent for forsaking You as my life source and for focusing my eyes on the pursuit of provisions to my own harm and the harm of others. I repent for choosing to serve Mammon in preference to You and thereby filling my life with darkness, bondage and stress. I repent for being double-minded with how I value money and unstable in all my ways.

I choose to hate Mammon and to love You, Lord, with all my heart. I choose to place my treasure where my heart is, in the Kingdom of Heaven, for You to use as You choose.

I acknowledge and confess my own sins of poverty for robbing God of tithes and offerings and for not paying the first-fruits of all that You have given me, for not providing for widows, orphans and the poor and for not being faithful even in a little. Lord, forgive me for these sins in order that I might be set free from this curse, in Jesus’ name.

Ancestors

I stand in the stead of my ancestors to confess and repent for their robbing God of tithes and offerings and for not paying their first-fruits of all that You gave them. I repent for myself and for my generational line for hardening my heart and shutting my hand against my brothers and sisters in their need and for not feeding, nor taking care of, the widows and orphans. Lord, I ask Your forgiveness for my ancestors’ sins in order that I might be set free from this curse.

I repent with all my heart across my generational line for pride and vain striving for silver and gold and for seeking earthly treasures. I choose to seek after the ultimate treasure of my Lord Jesus Christ. I repent for myself and for my family line for making any material possessions or things an idol in my life.

Poverty Mindset

Lord, the devil has decreed death and destruction over my life; he desires that my portion be poverty and hopelessness. On my behalf and on that of my ancestors I repent for believing in a poverty mindset, in the culture of the pauper spirit, for coming into agreement with lack, for giving myself to materialism and greed, and for being stingy with the body of Christ. I repent and confess the lie—that godliness implies living in poverty and lacking basic necessities, that it implies the requirement to live in the state of poverty and always be in need. Father, in Your mercy, free me and my future generations of the consequences of this lie and portion, and may all praise and honor be repeatedly given to You for the abundant blessings I know You have in store for me and for my family.

Giving

Lord, I repent for making my tithing and my giving “an obligation” to You and for not giving as a free act of my love. Lord, remove the canopy of law and obligation and the yoke of law and obligation from me. Lord, allow me to live in Your grace and under Your provision.

As Your Word professes, the generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself. He who sows bountifully will reap bountifully—in full measure—pressed down and running over. Lord, I revoke any spiritual permission I have given the spirit of poverty and return it to you.

Declaration

I declare that Jesus came to give us abundant life. I choose to believe, accept and trust that God will supply all my needs, that there will be an inheritance for me and for my descendants, that none will be in poverty, and that, instead, all their needs will be met. I choose to be connected to the “river of life,” where God grants the ability to acquire wealth for His kingdom. I will open my hand and heart to the poor and the needy, generously sharing my resources as You lead me, so no-one will lack, and so Your power will not be hindered and Your grace will remain.

Lord, I ask You to destroy the connectors and cleanse the lines attached between me and earthly treasurers. Lord, connect me to You alone. I choose not to hold onto anything but You. I give everything I have to You. You are the owner of all I have. Lord, allow me to live within Your grace and provision. Lord, I repent for not trusting You or Your provision for me. I will trust in You to provide for all my needs. I declare I will be content in You and in my wages in whatsoever financial state I find myself.

Lord, thank You for giving me the creativity to produce abundance through sowing my seed. Holy Spirit, teach me what to sow, what to reap, and what to harvest for divine purposes. I declare that I will eat the bread of life and delight in your abundance. Lord, help me to see money in all its aspects with spiritual eyes, knowing it is Your resource, that it belongs to You for whatever purposes You intend. Lord, I ask that You release the resources that the enemy has stolen from me and my family line. Lord, break off the curses of sowing much and bringing in little, of eating and not having enough, and of earning wages only to put them into a bag with holes. May You also restore the harvests that the locusts have eaten. Thank You, Lord.

I repent for myself and my family line for not receiving the rich inheritance You have for us in Your promise: to open the windows of heaven and pour out a blessing that we are unable to receive. I promise to fulfill my part of the conditions that I might receive these blessings and this inheritance—the abundance and gifts You have for us. I ask that these blessings come in such abundance that we will be able to leave a rich inheritance (of teachings as well as material gifts) to my children and grandchildren. Lord Jesus, I make the following confessions of belief:

- I believe Jesus died on the cross for my poverty.
- I believe His atonement provided for my abundance.
- I believe Jesus took on the curse of poverty for me.
- I believe that though Christ was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that through His poverty I might become rich (2 Cor. 8:9).
- I believe that God owns everything on the earth, that I am a manager and steward; all I have belongs to Him.

- I believe God owns all the silver and gold and all the cattle on a thousand hills, that He has infinite resources in heaven.
- I believe Jesus will meet all my needs from His abundance in heaven.
- I believe God’s promises for provision are conditional.
- I believe the Bible promises abundance, if I meet the prescribed conditions.
- I believe God shall provide for all my needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:19).
- I believe that I must pay tithes and offerings in order to receive the abundance of Heaven.
- I believe that if I am obedient, God will remove the devourer from my door.

Promises

And now, Oh Lord, I promise before You and these witnesses to:

- Pay tithing and offerings of all I receive
- Pay first-fruits of all I receive
- Give to support my church pastor, widows, orphans and the poor and needy
- Trust You for my provision
- Live on the 10-10-80 plan You have designed
- Wait for You to open the doors for job or business pursuits
- Give You thanks before I receive and give You all the Glory

Your Word

I declare that your Word says:

You will give us the treasures of heaven and hidden riches of secret places. You are the One who gives power to get wealth, that You may establish Your covenant which You swore to our fathers, as it is this day.

Jesus, I release “the spirit of Asher[†] anointing” and “the anointing to be an overcomer”—to have a breakthrough mentality. Father, I—and the generations which come after me—will not be beneath; we will be above. We will be the head and not the tail. I am blessed and highly favored of the Lord.

Father, give me a circumcised heart so You can release Your treasures from heaven. Lord, increase us more and more—me and my children. I beseech thee, send now prosperity in the name of Jesus.

I come against the “spirit of poverty” and Mammon, and I command them to go. I command the “spirit of poverty” to go—to get off my wallet, to get out of my checking account, to get off of and out of my home, to get out of my family, to get out of my business pursuits and to get out of my church. I solemnly declare that I have no agreement with you!

I ask for the “spirit of provision” and the “spirit of giving” to come into my life and under my domain. Lord, I pray that You will restore what the locusts have eaten and that which has been stolen, taken or lost. Restore me to my rightful place as an heir of the abundance of the Kingdom of God. All praise be to You, Lord, as You release my provision in Jesus’ name. AMEN.

[†] See Gen 30:13 and 49:20.