



Part Seven in the series: *"Towards a Christocentric Ecclesiology, or A Christ Centered Church"*

Provisioning the Kingdom Worker

A fresh look at Giving

What is the responsibility of the body of Christ toward the Ministers or Workers that God uses to feed their lives with the Word of God?

Initial Premises:

1. There is no indication of anything like we see in the modern Church, of a professional clergy, where ministers sell themselves for a specific amount of money each month.

Jesus warned that the spirit of a “hireling” would always loom about those called to care for the flock of God.

John 10:11-15

11 “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. 12 “But *a hireling*, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. 13 “*The hireling* flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. 14 “I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. 15 “As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.

Peter expresses similar concerns in 1 Peter 5:1-4

1 The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: 2 Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, *not for dishonest gain but eagerly*; 3 nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; 4 and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

For this reason we see, throughout Paul’s writings on the subject of The Minister/Worker, his continual cautions regarding how we think about provisioning The Minister/Worker, and his motives for Ministry.

Yet, at the same time, it is exceedingly clear in Paul’s writings that there is a “distinction” between all of us being ministers, and there being a class of ministers who are unique in the body. I know this will upset many, who have come out of the institutional approach to Christianity, with its clergy, and hierarchy, but Paul clearly sees differences in functions, while not exalting one function “over” another.

It is entirely possible to have a “priesthood within the general priesthood,” without hierarchy, control, and lording over to result from such an understanding. We know this is so, because Paul clearly taught it. Later on we will discuss this in more depth. For now we’ll just give a brief

overview.

For example, we note distinctions in Ephesians 4:11. Not all are apostles, not all are prophets, not all are evangelists, not all are pastor/teachers (4 fold? Just as a parenthesis brethren, can we please put away, once and for all, this discussion of 5 fold / 4 fold? This is old order religious thinking. It is just another manifestation of a professional clergy, creating something that isn't really in the text, to cause an exaltation of the worker over the body. I always get a sense, when I hear ministers refer to the "five fold," of Paul jumping up, and asking Jesus if he could come down here and clean up that arrogant teaching.) There are distinctions, but the distinction is not one of "quality or right to control," but rather "function."

The term "clergy" is derived from the word "kleros," which means God's lot or heritage. Laity, on the other hand, is derived from "laos," the people of God. In the New Testament these words are not contrasted. All Christians constitute God's kleros (1 Peter 5:3).

1Peter 5:3

3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage (Grk - kleros - from which clergy is derived), but being examples to the flock. (Obviously God's heritage represents all believers. For those who maintain a clergy/laity distinction, Peter here tells the leadership not to lord it over God's people/heritage/clergy.)

Equally, all Christians make up God's laos (2 Cor. 6:16; 1 Peter 2:9-10).

1Peter 2:9

9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people (Grk - laos) for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. (Clearly, all God's people, including leadership, are referenced among the laos/laity.)

And, we know there are "Teachers," and yet all believers are "to teach." The use of the capital "T" is not a use to emphasize quality, but distinction. Note for example Ephesians 4:11, where Paul refers to the equipping gift to the body, of a Teacher, compared with Hebrews 5:12:

Ephesians 4:11

11 And He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and **teachers**,

Hebrews 5:12

12 For though by this time **you ought to be teachers**, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.

At some point, in the life of all believers, we are to come to the place of being able to teach the principles of the Word of God. Yet, such calling does not imply there aren't still "Teachers" that are given to the body.

And there is a need for one further distinction, as seen in 1 John 2:27

27 But **the anointing** which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as **the same anointing teaches** you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.

We believe this to be none other than the Holy Spirit, yet we do not fail to see the place of the Ephesians 4:11 Teacher, nor the Hebrews 5:12 teachers. Distinctions and realities are the points here.

So with those who are called to “The Ministry,” as opposed to all of us who have “A Ministry.” Not all are called to the “The Ministry,” while all have “A Ministry.”

Note Paul’s way of expressing this:

Romans 15:14-16

14 Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. 15 Nevertheless, brethren, I have written more boldly to you on *some* points, as reminding you, because of the grace given to me by God, 16 that I might be *a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles*, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

Yet the same Paul recognizes we all have “a ministry.”

Ephesians 4:12

12 for the equipping of the saints for the **work of ministry**,...

2 Corinthians 3:6

6 who has made **us** competent **to be ministers** of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

We will look at these issues in more depth, within the body of this paper, but initially it is helpful to outline some of these concepts, lest we lose someone before we start the journey.

The distinctions in any functions within the body are not that of hierarchy, or value, or “better versus worse,” “higher versus lower,” “in charge versus controlled.” These distinctions certainly grew out of Paul’s distinctions but they were not essential to his concepts of leadership nor caused by the leading of the Holy Spirit. They were the traditions of men. They have served to hurt the Church of Jesus Christ, and communicate serious misunderstandings of biblical leadership.

Let me say it very clearly, there is no distinction between Clergy and Laity. All are clergy and all are laity. None are “not ministers,” yet some are “ministers in a unique calling.”

I think it would also be worthy of mention here, that often the distinction of “Full Time Ministers” versus “Not Full Time,” is a sad distinction, and certainly not one that the New Testament supports.

If such a distinction existed then Paul himself would not have been “Full Time,” as he also had an occupation of Tent Making. There were clearly times where he carried on that occupation, to provide for himself and those who traveled with him. All believers are called to “Full Time” ministry. Yet, at the same time, not are called to be “A Minister/Worker,” just as not all are called to be “A Teacher.”

As we will see in our study, provision is not a matter for those who are “full time,” as opposed to “part time,” since Paul regularly received provisioning from the body of Christ, but also carried on an occupation. Yet, there are those who are more regularly called to receive provisioning from the body than are others. This distinction need not be lost, while rejecting notions of hierarchy and professional clergy.

We will see provisioning has two elements to it:

1. We return natural provision for those who have fed us spiritual provision, whether they evidence any particular need or not. The greater need is on our part to provide the blessing in honor of the Lord, who is the ultimate Giver of spiritual nourishment. It is a matter of “honor.” We will look at this in depth later on.

Romans 15:25-28

25 But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. 26 For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem. 27 It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. *For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things.* 28 Therefore, when I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit, I shall go by way of you to Spain.

1 Corinthians 9:11-12,14

11 *If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things?* 12 If others are partakers of this right over you, are we not even more?

14 Even so the Lord has commanded that *those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.*

Galatians 6:6

6 One who is taught the word **must share all good things with the one who teaches.**

Such provisioning would be given to those who feed us spiritually, whether they are Elders, Teachers, Apostles, Prophets, or Evangelists. Paul identifies each of these categories as being those who would receive provisions based on their unique calling to nurture the body, in ways that exceed that of the body’s own nurturing of itself in gatherings or personal counsel.

2. There is a provisioning based on needs, and “honoring” is also connected with this provisioning.

Philippians 4:16

16 For even in Thessalonica **you sent aid** once and again **for my necessities.** 17 *Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account.*

Philippians 2:25-30

25 But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs. 26 For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. 27 Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow. 28 Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety. 29 Welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and **honor men like him,** 30 because he almost died for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up for the help you could not give me.

1 Timothy 5:17

17 The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of **double honor**, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. (It is very likely this phrase “double honor” also includes in it a monetary consideration in the honoring we show them, in its Greek meaning.)

2. A specified amount of money, in the form of a “salary,” committed by a local Church to a minister/worker, appears to put unhealthy pressures upon a body of believers, and encourages a minister to create pressures, intimidations, and focus, on the people’s giving rather than focusing his time on blessing them with the Word and spiritual input.

There is no evidence, during the time of the Apostles, that anything approaching the concept of a regular “Church salary” ever developed amongst those called to Minister in a “Minister” capacity to the saints.

The Church was never perceived by the apostles to be a Corporation or a business or an organization. As such, salaries, professional titles, and staff have no place within the concept of Church that Jesus taught His apostles.

However, and let me be as clear as I can possibly be, I do believe there is a valid place of “salary” when properly defined. In the modern Church, where such error abounds among the clergy, money and salaries have often grown to eclipse the Word that is brought forth, and men seek great wealth from their ministry. This has been a great blight on the Church, and has turned the world even colder towards the Church. But, while there is no New Testament indication that leaders should ever “pressure” a group of people to provide them with a monthly consistent salary, there is also nothing that mitigates against them having a salary. So, what is the distinction here?

To avoid excess in monetary issues, in the life of any given leader, if God did put it upon a sufficient number of brethren to contribute financially to a given Minister, such that the amount exceeded his actual monthly needs, wisdom would encourage a managed account be established, with the aid of spiritual brethren assisting in the oversight and accountability structure of it, and determining what would be a moderate and appropriate monthly salary to come from the consistent giving of the people. In this manner, the Minister avoids excess, receives a consistent monthly salary, yet never puts any pressure upon the people for consistency of giving or hires himself to them for a specific wage. His trust is in God alone, to guide His people to give, and His accountability to God and the body is established by the oversight team who helps in the administration of the monies received into the ministry.

How does this differ from the traditional Church approach to salaries? Much in every way. He is no hireling, he puts no pressure for consistent giving to his ministry (beyond gentle appeals for assistance), he avoids excessive income and wealth from ministry, he is willing to work with his hands in the absence of consistent salary, he serves the body free of any charge, he avoids developing false doctrines such as tithing so as to manipulate the body into consistent giving, and his trust is in God alone to lead His people to provide for him an amount that reflects God’s desire for him.

Where the notion of “salary” went very wrong, was when a professional priest/clergy class was developed, separated and elevated above the people, and had attached to it a notion of a “right” to a regular salary from a specified group of people, gathered in a specified building designated as “The Church.”

3. It is clear from a study of the New Testament that God does desire for His ministers/workers to be provided for from the body of Christ, and the body is blessed for doing so.

In giving to those who feed them, they not only provide for the basic needs of the Minister, but they release him to serve others, and beyond all this they honor the Lord who has given to them the gifts resident in the lives of those who lead and feed them.

4. When a minister is enabled by the body to do the job he is called to do, and when he does his job, then the body is made healthy by it.

In the following study we will look at what the New Testament teaches along the lines of there being identifiable ministers, and how and why to give to them.

We’ll begin by looking at the key words “Minister, Servant, Worker”. These three words make up the primary descriptive words for the one who is uniquely called of God to feed and care for the

body of Christ.

We'll also consider the principle of honoring the Lord with our increase, and see the distinction between tithing to the priesthood, as a Law of Moses, and provisioning His ministers, as an eternal principle of honoring the Lord.

Proverbs 3:9-10

9 **Honor the LORD with your wealth** and with **the firstfruits of all your increase**; 10 then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.

The term “Minister”	
Scripture	Descriptions
<p>Acts 26:14-18 14 “And when we all had fallen to the ground, I heard a voice speaking to me and saying in the Hebrew language, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? <i>It is hard for you to kick against the goads.</i>’ 15 “So I said, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ And He said, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. 16 ‘But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, <i>to make you a minister</i> and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. 17 ‘I will deliver you from the <i>Jewish</i> people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, 18 ‘to open their eyes, <i>in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.</i>’</p>	<p><i>A witness of things learned about God in life and learned by revelation. One who is sent to others. One who opens the spiritual eyes of people, turns them from darkness to light. One who delivers people from Satan’s power to God’s power. One who brings people to forgiveness of sins and to their inheritance in God among other believers. One who encourages sanctification of faith in Christ.</i></p>
<p>Romans 15:14-16 14 Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. 15 Nevertheless, brethren, I have written more boldly to you on <i>some</i> points, as reminding you, because of the grace given to me by God, 16 that I might be <i>a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.</i></p>	<p><i>One who boldly reminds folks of God’s ways because of God’s grace. One who serves the gospel of God to people. The Gospel is not so much a reference to the ministry of evangelism, but encompasses the entire ministry of the life of Christ to the body of Christ, which of course includes the role of witnessing to the lost, but extends far beyond that function in service to the Saved. One who brings people as an offering to God by the Spirit.</i></p>
<p>2 Corinthians 11:5-9 5 For I consider that I am not at all inferior to the most eminent apostles. 6 Even though <i>I am</i> untrained in speech, yet <i>I am</i> not in knowledge. But we have been thoroughly manifested among you in all things. 7 Did I commit sin in humbling myself that you might be exalted, because <i>I preached the gospel of God to you free of charge</i>? 8 I robbed other churches, taking wages from them to minister to you. 9 And when I was present with you, and in need, I was a burden to no one, for what I lacked the brethren who came from Macedonia supplied. And in everything I kept myself from being burdensome to you, and so I will keep myself.</p>	<p><i>He preaches the Gospel free of “charge.” It doesn’t mean he doesn’t receive from financial giving. It means he doesn’t “charge” for his ministry. He receives wages for what he does, yet he never does so as a burden to anyone. This protects the minister from the temptation of serving for money. Any form of contractual arrangement between the Minister and those he ministers to sets up the danger of the principle of the “hireling.” He must be a man who trusts God alone for his provision, and trusts at times God will prompt His saints for that provision. Salary seeks to regulate committed giving and violates the principle of trust in God for provision, and violates the principle of Spirit leading in the flock.</i></p>
<p>Ephesians 3:6,7 6 that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, 7 of which <i>I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me</i> by the effective working of His power.</p>	<p><i>To bring people into their inheritance in Christ and partakers of Christ’s promises. To move in His power.</i></p>

<p>Ephesians 6:21 21 But that you also may know my affairs <i>and</i> how I am doing, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will...</p>	<p><i>One who is faithful in his calling.</i></p>
<p>Colossians 1:7 7 as you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, make all things known to you;</p>	<p><i>One who is faithful in his calling.</i></p>
<p>Colossians 1:23-26 23 if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister. 24 I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church, 25 of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to <u>fulfill the word of God, 26 the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints.</u></p>	<p><i>He preaches the Gospel (the good news of Jesus Christ). He rejoices in sufferings for the body. He is a minister “to the Church.” His ministry is a “stewardship” to Christ. He fulfills the Word of God in the earth on God’s behalf.</i></p>
<p>Colossians 4:7 7 Tychicus, a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me.</p>	<p><i>He is a faithful minister. He passes on the information the Lord wants shared with the body.</i></p>
<p>1 Thessalonians 3:1,2 Therefore, when we could no longer endure it, we thought it good to be left in Athens alone, 2 and sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, <u>to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith.</u></p>	<p><i>He labors in the Gospel. He establishes and encourages the body in their faith.</i></p>
<p>1 Timothy 4:6 6 If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, <u>nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine</u> which you have carefully followed.</p>	<p><i>He instructs the brethren in God’s truths. He nourishes the body with words of faith and good doctrine.</i></p>
<p>Hebrews 8:1,2 Now <i>this is</i> the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, 2 a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man.</p>	<p><i>His ministry reflects the heavenly sanctuary and tabernacle.</i></p>

Romans 15:25-28

25 But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints.26 For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem.27 It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. ***For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things.***28 Therefore, when I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit, I shall go by way of you to Spain.

One who goes wherever God sends him, to bring the life of God to whatever people God wants to receive. One who rallies the larger body of Christ towards God's purposes.

Reasons given for financial giving to the Minister: Those who receive spiritual things should give natural things as an expression of appreciation and honor.

We will take up the theme of honoring the Lord in our provisioning of Ministers, a little later in this discussion. Here it is important to note that the reason for giving to the Minister is the "spiritual" rather than "natural" things he provides the body. The term spiritual implies he receives things from the Spirit of God and imparts them to the people of God. As such the provision is a provision from the Lord Himself, and thus giving to the Minister becomes equivalent to giving to God Himself, as we honor Him for His provision.

As God, who has no needs of human provision, is the provider of the spiritual things we need, the Minister learns that he himself has no direct need of the body's provision, since God alone is the source of the spiritual material he shares and is therefore the source of his natural provision to be able to continue to share it.

The pressuring for a permanent salary drops the Ministers eyes and trusts from God as His provider, and puts them on people for his provision. It is far better for him to minister freely, and maintain his confidence in God alone for His provision, than to create a human system of provision for himself and diminish his trust and example of trust in God.

Then, as God speaks to the hearts of His saints, to make provision for the Minister, the Minister recognizes his Source, and the people are always giving out of a clear sense of divine commission and thus honoring Him in doing so. Compensating the Minister remains a focus on gratitude to the Lord.

1 Corinthians 9:1-19

Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?2 If I am not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.3 My defense to those who examine me is this:4 Do we have no right to eat and drink?5 Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as do also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas?6 ***Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working?***7 Who ever goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock?8 Do I say these things as a mere man? Or does not the law say the same also?9 For it is written in the law of Moses, “You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.” Is it oxen God is concerned about?10 Or does He say it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, *this* is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope.11 ***If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things?12 If others are partakers of this right over you, are we not even more? Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ.***13 Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar?14 Even so the Lord has commanded that ***those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.***15 But I have used none of these things, nor have I written these things that it should be done so to me; for it would be better for me to die than that anyone should make my boasting void.16 For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!17 For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship.18 ***What is my reward then? That when I preach the gospel, I may present the gospel of Christ without charge, that I may not abuse my authority in the gospel.***19 For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant (Grk. Doulos - slave with no rights) to all, that I might win the more;

1 Thessalonians 2:3-8

1 Th 2:3 For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive, 4 but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts. 5 For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, **nor with a pretext for greed**—God is witness. 6 Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ. 7 But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. 8 So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us. 9 For you remember, brothers, **our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.**10 You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers.

Makes people his life work. He labors at his calling. He sows spiritual things into people’s lives. He furthers the Gospel. He preaches the Gospel. He ministers with joy, and not as a duty. He ministers freely, without charge. He has authority, but uses it to bless rather than control or dominate. He is a servant not a master.

Reasons given for financial giving to the Minister: It provides for him so he can keep on ministering. They have a right to not work at things outside their specific ministry calling, if they choose and if they are led that way. To not do so would be like a soldier going to war and receiving no compensation for it. To not do so would be like an ox tilling a field but not eating as he does so and thus not regaining his strength to till more. It is proper to give a Minister natural things for the spiritual things he has given to the flock, though they can choose to not exercise this right, if they believe it will damage the flock. For the minister to not receive financial gifts would be like a priest who did not eat of the sacrifices the people brought. Those (Apostles, Ministers, Teachers, Elders) who preach the Gospel should live and receive money for having done so. But, in doing so they must never allow others to give from false motivations. Ministers should always minister “without charge,” but wise people should always want to pay them. For the minister to “require” payment is to “abuse” his authority in Christ. Rather than being a CEO, he postures himself as a servant.

The notion of required salary, once again violates the principle of servanthood and forms the basis of a professional ministry concept. In Jesus’ and Paul’s day slaves did not receive salaries. They worked free of charge, and had no expectations or demands. He was not a contracted laborer, but rather a slave without rights. Any money given to a slave was perceived as a blessing, not a right. Thus, Ministers are not postured as masters over the flock, as CEO’s over corporations, but the minister sees himself as a slave to his masters who are the flock. The flock, as far as the Minister is concerned, is his CEO, when it comes to provision. He exists to provide for the flock, not demand provision from them. The moment a contractual arrangement, between a Minister and a flock is established, in that moment the Minister ceases to truly function as a “slave,” but begins to step towards the role of a master, as a salaried officer, in terms of “entitlement.” Paul was very cautious in all of his writings to posture himself as a slave to the people. He never allows, in himself, any attitude or approach that would imply “demand,” or “entitlement,” or lording it over the flock. On the part of the Minister “We offer our gifting FREE OF CHARGE! On the part of the body “They honor the Lord with their giving.”

The term “Servant”

Scripture	Description
2 Timothy 2:24 24 And <i>a servant of the Lord</i> must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient,	<i>He is a servant “of the Lord.” He is not quarrelsome. He is gentle. He is able to teach. He is patient. I.e. He is virtuous.</i>
The term “Worker”	
Scripture	Description
Romans 16:9 9 Greet Urbanus, our <i>fellow worker in Christ</i> , and Stachys, my beloved.	<i>His work is most especially “in Christ.” Therefore it is about Him, unto Him, through His power, trusting in His provision.</i>
Romans 16:21 21 Timothy, my <i>fellow worker</i> , and Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, my countrymen, greet you.	<i>He labors with other Ministers in the Gospel. He’s not a lone ranger.</i>
2 Corinthians 8:23 23 If <i>anyone inquires</i> about Titus, <i>he is my partner and fellow worker</i> concerning you. Or if our brethren <i>are inquired about</i> , <i>they are</i> messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ.	<i>He partners with other Ministers in the work of the Gospel. He is a messenger to the Church. He is the outward manifestation of the hidden glory of Christ.</i>
Philippians 2:25 25 Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, <i>fellow worker</i> , and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need;	<i>He works with other Ministers, and does so with a militant spirit. He is a messenger to the Churches. He ministers to other Ministers needs.</i>
1 Thessalonians 3:1,2 Therefore, when we could no longer endure it, we thought it good to be left in Athens alone, ² and sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our <i>fellow laborer</i> in the gospel of Christ, to <u>establish you and encourage you concerning your faith</u> ,	<i>He establishes and encourages the body in their faith.</i> <i>Notice again, Paul’s use of terminology for the Minister. He is a Laborer, rather than CEO. Nothing of Paul’s thinking about the Minister ever approached the concept of CEO. He consistently taught a non-hierarchical approach to leadership in the Churches.</i> <i>The only authority a Minister carries is the authority of the living Word he brings from Christ. Any move that a Minister or congregation makes to position the Minister in the body as a master, a CEO, or a salaried officer, changes the clear role that Paul taught in his letters to the Churches.</i>
1 Timothy 5:17,18 17 Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. ¹⁸ For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,” and, “ <i>The worker is worthy of his wages.</i> ”	<i>He is sometimes an Elder in a local Church. He labors in the Word and doctrine.</i> <i>Reasons given for financial giving to the Worker: To fail to provide for the Elder/Worker who labors in the word and doctrine, is to starve the Minister, and dishonor the Lord, preventing the Minister from continuing his ministry with full strength on behalf of the body. He is worthy, deserving of honor, of his financial wages. While some are uncertain as to what “worthy of double honor means,” it is evident from Paul’s use of the ox metaphor, in other contexts, that at least a part of what Paul is referring to here is the wages an Elder should receive for his ministry of the Word. It is highly unlikely he is referring to double wages since it is “honor” he references to, and since there was no clear definition of what “single” wages would look like. Wage here simply implies the financial support for services rendered to the body.</i>

A Summary of Descriptions:

These passages comprise the essential body of material using the uniquely descriptive titles of

Minister, Servant, and Worker. These passages describe these persons as:

1. **Apostles** are Ministers, Servants, Workers.
2. **Assistants to Apostles** are Ministers, Servants, Workers.
3. **Traveling teachers, prophets, and evangelists** are Ministers, Servants, Workers.
4. **Elders/Bishops** are Ministers, Servants, Workers.

These passages make it clear what the primary work of the Minister is:

1. To witness to others of the things learned from God.
2. To communicate the revelation learned from God.
3. To be sent from God to others.
4. To open spiritual eyes in people.
5. To turn people from spiritual darkness to spiritual light.
6. To deliver people from the power of Satan to the power of God.
7. To bring individuals to God's forgiveness and grace in Christ.
8. To reveal the saints inheritance in Christ.
9. One who encourages sanctification and faith in God's people.
10. To remind people of God's ways.
11. To serve the people with the Gospel.
12. To bring God's people to Him as an offering by the Spirit.
13. One who goes wherever God sends him.
14. One who brings God's life to those he's sent to.
15. One who rallies the broader body to God's will and purposes.
16. He makes people his life work.
17. He ministers with joy, and not as a "duty."
18. He ministers "free of charge," yet receives his wages from the body.
19. He has authority, but uses it to serve rather than control, dominate, or intimidate.

20. He is a servant, not a master.
21. He is faithful to his calling.
22. He rejoices in his sufferings for the body.
23. His ministry is focused on the Church.
24. He has a stewardship directly to Christ.
25. He nourishes the body with truth and doctrine.
26. He is virtuous in all his demeanor and behavior.
27. His ministry is essentially “in Christ.”
28. He labors at the side of other Ministers.
29. He works with a militant spirit.
30. He assists other Ministers.
31. He encourages the body.
32. He is to be the outward manifestation of the hidden glory of Christ.

Two Common Elements of the Ministry:

Character & Equipping

Character:

To provide seasoned wisdom as an Elder, to provide oversight as a Bishop -

Paul defines more specifically a general definition of the Minister, Servant, Worker, as an Elder/Bishop.”

All Ministers, including Apostles functioned as Elders and Bishop/Overseers:

1 Peter 5:1-4

1 The elders who are among you I exhort, **I who am a fellow elder** and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: 2 Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, **serv^{ing} as overseers**, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; 3 nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; 4 and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

He who should be provisioned for must evidence these qualities:

1 Timothy 3:1-8

This *is* a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires **a good *work***. 2 A bishop then must be **blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach**; 3 **not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous**; 4 **one who rules his**

own house well, having *his* children in submission with all reverence 5 (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); 6 **not a novice**, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the *same* condemnation as the devil. 7 Moreover he must have a **good testimony among those who are outside**, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

A common element to all categories of Ministers to be supported is their ability to teach and equip:

From these passages we can move on to other supportive passages, as to the roles of these individuals and the body's responsibility towards them.

To Teach -

Galatians 6:6-10

6 Let him who is *taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches*. 7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. 8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. 9 And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. 10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Reasons given for financial giving to the Minister: It is appropriate to share “in all good things” with the teacher of the Word. It is interesting where this verse fits in context. Paul goes on to say, if we don’t share with the teaching Minister, God will discipline us. To not share or sow into the Kingdom, is to sow to our flesh. Rather than growing weary in work that we spend the increase from on our selves, we should work hard so as to spend our increase in providing for the “good” work of God done by God’s Ministers. If we do give God will see to it that just as the farmer who sows seed into his field will one day reap a good harvest from it, so those who sow into the field of the Minister’s life will reap a great harvest in this life. It is “the good” we are all called to. Our giving to “those” of the household of faith, in this context, are specifically the teaching Ministers.

To Equip -

Ephesians 4:11-16

11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, **12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ**, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; 14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

The theme of first fruits and the principles of honoring must be connected with this theme of provisioning the Minister, as such provisioning is clearly linked to the way we honor God for His provision of spiritual nourishment. As Israel honored God by their giving of their natural first fruits, and such giving was to those Priests & Levites whom God set apart from the rest of the body, so our honoring of God for the natural and spiritual food He provides us, under the New Covenant, is expressed in giving to those whom He gives to us to nourish us in our faith. Such honoring is not limited to just Ministers, but extends to the poor, needy, orphans, widows, and strangers, as His Spirit leads.

Such honoring is not to be perceived as a separation between clergy and laity, nor as a professional salary, as we all have genuine ministries, but is a recognition of function and the need for

provisioning various functions. Because the Ministry of the Word to the body is so important, God separates certain individuals to become uniquely “Ministers” to the body, of the things they need for their spiritual life and growth. Thus giving to them honors God who sent them.

I also have to say that I am encouraged by a well known document, from around 110AD, by the name of the “Didache,” or sometimes known as “The Teaching of the Apostles.” I include here, a portion of their teaching, as relates to those called to minister the Gospel in an itinerant fashion:

Chapter 13.—Support of Prophets

1. But every true prophet that wills to abide among you is worthy of his support.
2. So also a true teacher is himself worthy, as the workman, of his support. Matthew 10:10; cf. Luke 10:7
3. Every first-fruit, therefore, of the products of wine-press and threshing-floor, of oxen and of sheep, you shall take and give to the prophets, for they are your ~~high~~ priests.
4. But if you have not a prophet, give it to the poor.
5. If you make a batch of dough, take the first-fruit and give according to the commandment.
6. So also when you open a jar of wine or of oil, take the first-fruit and give it to the prophets;
7. and of money (silver) and clothing and every possession, take the first-fruit, as it may seem good to you, and give according to the commandment.

I used “strike out” through the words “high priest,” because I suspect this reflects the errors that were beginning to creep into the Church, thanks to such men as Ignatius, and others of his persuasion. After the death of John they moved quickly to distort the biblical roles of leadership, into something very ugly and hierarchal, but at the very least this passage indicates they had some continued understanding of the importance of support for those called to give themselves to Kingdom work.

In this context, of honoring, we can notice the principle of biblical Firstfruits:

Honor the Lord with the First Fruits

While we will focus our discussion of giving on the area of money, we all know that giving extends to many more things than just money. It is a serious fallacy to limit giving to money. It could include food, clothing, housing, gifts, time, encouragement, respect, appreciation, etc.

Proverbs 3:9-10

9 Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your increase; 10 then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.

Now, as we begin this segment of our study, I freely admit that I see something that is still controversial among those who have left the institutional Church. It is that I’m convinced the principle of First Fruits giving to the Lord preceded the Law, is evidenced in the life of Abraham, Jacob, Job, and others, without specific explanations of where or why they were given the understanding they had. We’ll explore this now.

Premise #1: God wants you blessed in both spiritual and natural ways. This verse is all we need to know this truth, but there are many verses which also make this clear. There is nothing about these verses that limit the concept to the Tabernacle or Temple or the Levitical priesthood, or the Law of Moses. They do not directly connect to the concept of the Tithe, as the Tithe was a completely separate concept the Lord instructed Israel in, though we can be certain the way they handled their tithe related to fulfilling this verse. These principles are written in a clearly “axiomatic or timeless” manner. The Tithe was limited to one nation - Israel, for a specified period of time - preceding the

destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD., and has no direct application to the New Covenant Church. The principles of honor and firstfruits extend far beyond the time and nation limited concept of the Tithe.

Deuteronomy 8:18

18“And you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day.

Premise #2: Three keys are given in Proverbs 3:9,10 and Deuteronomy 8:18 for wealth development:

- Key #1: Honor the Lord
- Key #2: Honor Him with your Wealth
- Key #3: Honor Him with your Firstfruits

As a side note, there is nothing in this verse that indicates believers, and perhaps especially “Ministers,” should ever do anything to gain wealth. If it is given by God it is a blessing. If it is pursued by man, and especially if pursued through unscrupulous means, it becomes a curse to him.

Let’s look at each of these areas:

A. Honor the Lord.

If honoring the Lord with your money or stuff is the primary key to prosperity, then what would this “Honoring” look like in our lives?

Here are some less than perfect motives (notice I didn’t say these were fully “wrong motives”):

1. I give because they teach I should and I don’t want to look stingy.
2. I give because everyone else around here seems to be doing it. I guess it is just a Christian thing to do.
3. I give because there seem to be all kinds of needs for money in the Kingdom, and I want to do my part and contribute to the needs.
4. I give because an elder intimidates me and says I should.
5. I give because I’m afraid not to. I don’t want to have my things devoured by the enemy.

Many use Malachi 3 as the basis for scaring people into giving the Tithe:

Mal.3:7-11

7...Return to Me, and I will return to you,” Says the Lord of hosts. “But you said, ‘In what way shall we return?’ 8 “Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, ‘In what way have we robbed You?’ In tithes and offerings. 9You are cursed with a curse, For you have robbed Me, Even this whole nation. 10Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house, And try Me now in this,” Says the Lord of hosts, “If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it. 11 “**And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, So that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, Nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field,**” Says the Lord of hosts;

To begin with, this verse applied to Israel alone, under the direct administration of the Mosaic Covenant, which has been superceded by the New Covenant in Christ’s blood. Whatever this phrase “honor the Lord with your increase” means, under the New Covenant, it does not relate to an Old Covenant law of tithing, but rather to being led by His Spirit in all we do with all we have. The principle of the New Covenant calls for 100% surrender and giving, not a limited percentage of all. As we will see, the greatest danger here is not the failure of giving to God, and thus becoming vulnerable to the devourer. The greatest danger

is the failure of honoring the Lord, manifested by failure to give to God. Ministers continually focus the flock on the element of “money” from this passage, when what they should be doing is to focus their eyes on honoring the Lord. Failure to give properly is only one manifestation of dishonoring, there are many others. The central element is failure to honor. To get people to give again, without re-establishing honor is to pervert the whole principle of this passage and turn it into some manipulative mechanism to create job security through the Minister’s salary.

The Perfect Motive:

1. We read it already: “Return to Me.”

Giving with the right motive is first and foremost giving to Him. It’s not to build nice Church buildings, not even first and foremost to pay the Minister a wage for his ministry of the Word, or to avoid looking stingy, or any of a host of other “less than perfect motives.”

Giving should be ALL about *honoring God*.

The very fact that these people even asked the question: ‘In what way shall we return?’, shows they were not living their lives or handling their wealth with God as the first place in their lives.

It’s safe to say they were not “Seeking First the Kingdom of God, and His Righteousness.”

They didn’t even know they were “Away” from God, needing to return. Obviously they weren’t honoring Him.

And just giving money doesn’t guarantee you have “Returned” to God. Lots of people give to all kinds of religious and philanthropic organizations, where God is very remotely involved. If you give without honoring God you haven’t given to God, you have just given. In fact we could go a step beyond that. If we don’t give “As unto the Lord, in honor of the Lord” then we might as well have spent it on ourselves, because God doesn’t recognize giving that doesn’t first and foremost honor Him.

2. Giving acknowledges and appreciates the blessings of God in our lives.

He gave you the ability to get wealth.
Health, wisdom, a job, opportunities...
He blessed you with the wealth you have.
A job, an inheritance, a miracle, gifts, etc...

3. Giving puts God and His Kingdom in first place.

“Seek First the Kingdom of God, and His Righteousness.” Mt. 6:33

“Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” 1 Cor.10:31

B. Honor Him with your wealth.

When we consider honoring the Lord with our wealth, it is here that we take up the discussion of just what does giving of our substance look like under the New Covenant?

1. Is Tithing applicable to the believer under the New Covenant?

Over the years I've heard many explanations for the Tithe, but most of it lacks solid biblical support.

Modern ministers are not the N.T. equivalent to the Old Testament Priests & Levites. All believers are priests.

Have you ever wondered why Paul, when raising up Gentile congregations, would never once teach directly on the subject of Tithing? He never uses that term to describe the believer's giving. Why?

Think about it for a minute. Who, according to the Old Testament, were to be the recipients of the Tithe? The Levites!

Numbers 18:21-32

And, behold, I have given **the children of Levi** all the **tenth** in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, *even* the service of the tabernacle of the congregation. Neither must the children of Israel from now on come near the tabernacle of the congregation, lest they bear sin, and die. But the Levites will do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they will bear their iniquity: *it will be* a statute for ever throughout your generations, that among the children of Israel they have no inheritance. But the **tithes** of the children of Israel, which they offer *as* an heave offering to the LORD, I have given **to the Levites** to inherit: therefore I have said to them, Among the children of Israel they will have no inheritance.

2. Were there still functioning Levites in Paul's day? Certainly!

Can you just imagine the ruckus that would have ensued if Paul had gone around teaching the Gentile converts, to say nothing of his Jewish converts, that someone "other than the Levites" were to receive The Tithe? There were already many Jews who thought Paul taught Christians and Christian Jews to violate the Law of Moses. Just imagine if he had directly touched the pocket books of the existing Levitical clergy of his day, in a very direct and violating teaching.

Listen to Paul describe his commitment to not violate the Law of Moses:

Acts 21:19-22

19 When he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. 20 And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, "You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law; 21 "but they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs. 22 "What then? The assembly must certainly meet, for they will hear that you have come.

From this passage, and Paul's actions as a result of their concerns, and his acute understanding of the distinctions of the New Covenant, it is obvious that Paul was not teaching the Church to violate the Law of Moses.

Acts 22:1-3

1 "Brethren and fathers, hear my defense before you now." 2 And when they heard that he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, they kept all the more silent. Then he said: 3 "I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was

zealous toward God as you all are today.

From this passage it is abundantly clear that Paul's entire defense was that he did not teach believers to violate the Law of Moses.

Acts 26:22

22 "Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come—

Acts 28:23

23 So when they had appointed him a day, many came to him at his lodging, to whom he explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening.

Some would say that Paul did teach the Church to violate the Law of Moses, in teaching the Galatians and others to not circumcise their males, but careful analysis of all Paul's teachings and actions in this area make it very evident the "only" time he opposed males being circumcised was when it was evident they were doing so with the thought that this was essential for their salvation, and were thus making their salvation a matter of works. Remember he actually encouraged Timothy to be circumcised... In general Paul left the matter of circumcision up to the individual believer, and never tied it to the Old Testament for his Gentile converts.

Therefore, Paul would not have taught the Church to Tithe to their local shepherds and elders, nor even to the apostles and prophets, because the term Tithe belongs entirely to the Mosaic system in connection with the Temple and Priests & Levites, all of which existed and were functioning in his day.

Rather, Paul teaches the "Principle" of honoring the Lord with their increase, and draws connections to all of the major categories for receiving tithe monies. Yet, he makes it clear the Church is in no way the replacement, one-for-one, of the Old Testament Mosaic system.

Church buildings are not the equivalent to the O.T. temple. Believers are the temple.

The O.T. storehouse still exists in the current Mosaic system, of Paul's day, in Jerusalem, and the N.T. Church is not its replacement, since the Church is not a place but a people.

Under the New Covenant this principle is woven throughout, teaching us to rely upon the Holy Spirit to guide us in all acts of faith and practice. His leadership is the key principle for all spiritual behavior.

Under the Old Covenant the Levite was cared for, through the tithe system. In the New Testament, according to the book of Hebrews, the Levitical priesthood has been replaced by the Melchizedek priesthood of Christ, that rather than minister before a physical altar ministers in the very presence of Christ. The book of Hebrews is our best resource for understanding this. Both Peter and Paul tell us that we are all the only priesthood that functions under the New Covenant.

When Paul makes references to New Testament ministers having a right to ministry wages, as the Priesthood of the Old Testament had a right, he is not creating a New Testament specialized priesthood, but is simply recognizing a "functional" priesthood in the midst of the general priesthood of all believers. A "functional" priesthood is far different than a

“formal/positional/titled” priesthood. It is the “function” that is provisioned, not the office, position, or title.

Notice the next category of provisioning under the Mosaic Covenant:

Deuteronomy 14:29

29 And the Levite, (because he hath no part nor inheritance with thee,) and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest.

The strangers, fatherless, and widows were also cared for by the tithe. So it becomes evident that the Tithe was applied to far more than just the priesthood or the care of the Temple. It was given to:

- The Temple
- The Priesthood
- The Feasts (For themselves to celebrate the Feasts of Israel)
- To Strangers and the Poor
- To the Fatherless and Widows

Do any of these categories apply to New Covenant believers? Certainly. But in acknowledging this, it is just as important that this be maintained as a principle, under the Spirit’s guidance rather becoming a law that Ministers use to intimidate their flocks into giving them a salary.

C. Honor the Lord with your First Fruits.

1. How do the principles of Tithing apply to New Covenant believers?

As you can see from the above study, I did not say there was no application of the principles of tithing to the believer under the New Covenant, but rather that the New Covenant elevates everything to a higher spiritual plane of honoring the Lord by following the leading of the Spirit for all we do with our increase.

Let me be as clear as possible here. I very much do believe there is application of Tithing *principles* under the New Covenant for the following reasons:

- a. The entire concept of “honor the Lord” certainly doesn’t conclude with the Old Testament.
- b. God does still provide us with first fruits under the New Covenant. These first fruits extend beyond the agrarian society, into every evidence of increase from labor or the provisioning of God.
- c. God does still want us to give, but only by “His” direction, under the New Covenant.
- d. God makes it very clear under the New Covenant that all categories for giving in the Old Testament, still exist in the New Covenant, though newly defined.

1) The Temple -

1 Corinthians 3:16,17

16 Do you not know that **you are the temple of God** and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you?17 If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which *temple* you are.

If, under the Old Testament, tithing related to the Temple, then would we be safe in saying tithing could have no application to the New Testament Temple? Isn't it possible the Lord, in the midst of His Temple, in the midst of His people, might give instructions as to giving to Himself within His people? Certainly. Are we wisest to actually use the term "tithing" for this? I personally don't think so, and in this connection I don't teach anyone to "Tithe." I don't use this term in connection with our giving, except in those times where I am attempting to explain the timeless principle of honoring God with the blessings He gives, and in giving a portion of that blessing at His leading.

2) The Priesthood -

1 Peter 2:4 Coming to Him *as to* a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God *and* precious,5 you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Here we see the Priesthood of all believer's.

But then, notice what appears to be a functional priesthood within the priesthood.

1 Cor. 9:13-14

13 Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat *of the things* of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of *the offerings* of the altar?14 Even so the Lord has commanded that ***those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.***

Don't miss the "even so..." principle Paul references. He clearly sees the Old Testament principle as having some application under the New Covenant, but in no way as it has been taught throughout Church history, justifying a professional salaried clergy.

Romans 15:14-16

14 Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.15 Nevertheless, brethren, I have written more boldly to you on *some* points, as reminding you, because of the grace given to me by God,16 that I might be ***a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.***

It is evident from even just these two passages, that while all believers are called to minister, there are clearly those who are separated out from among the believers and called to be Ministers to the body. They are never actually referred to as Priests, since that would violate the principle of the priesthood of all believers, but it is obvious they carry a unique role within the body.

3) The common believer -

The Love Feast, (N.T. = For themselves for eating the Lord's Supper)

It is evident that believers are allowed to spend a portion of their giving on themselves, in relation to the Lord's Supper, just as they spent a portion of their tithe upon themselves in the Old Testament Feasts. As the believer's gather for the New

Testament love feast, they come together and eat a full meal with one another. As in the Old Testament they drink with one another. Both elements are present at the Lord's Supper meal in 1 Corinthians 11.

1 Corinthians 11:20-22

20 Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat **the Lord's Supper**.²¹ For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of *others*; and one is hungry and another is drunk.²² What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise *you*.

The only problem with the Corinthians is that they were abusing their privileges in the feast.

4) Strangers and the Poor -

Hebrew 13:2

2 Do not neglect to show hospitality to **strangers**, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

Galatians 2:9-10

9 and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we *should go* to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.¹⁰ *They desired* only that we should **remember the poor**, the very thing which I also was eager to do.

5) The Fatherless and Widows -

James 1:27

27 Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit **orphans and widows** in their trouble, *and* to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

Therefore we conclude, if the Lord specifically calls for provision for all the same categories under the New Covenant, as under the Old Covenant, that at least the principle of tithing remains, only as led by the Spirit, and not under the direction of some titled pastoral ministry, and under the higher principle of "honor" rather than "Law." The only law we are under now, is the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus and the law of love.

If the principle of honoring the Lord in the first fruits was what sanctified the entire concept of tithing in the Old Covenant, certainly we have no question the Lord would have us honor Him under the New Covenant. If the same basic needs exist in the life of the Church as existed under the Old Covenant then we conclude the principle of tithing would flow right on in to the New Testament, though without any concept of percentages or specific amounts.

2. If we are not under the Law in the New Covenant, and tithing was a part of the Law in the Old Testament, then why would even the principle of first fruits have any application for New Testament believers?

This is a very important question, and for this we turn to two passages in the Old Testament:

Genesis 14:18-20

18 Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he *was* the priest of God Most High.¹⁹ And he blessed him and said: "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; ²⁰ And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand." And he gave him a **tithe** (a 10th part) of

all.

Genesis 28:18-22

18 Then Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put at his head, set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on top of it.¹⁹ And he called the name of that place Bethel; but the name of that city had been Luz previously.²⁰ Then Jacob made a vow, saying, “If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on,²¹ “so that I come back to my father’s house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God.²² “And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God’s house, and of all that You give me **I will surely give a tenth to You.**”

As very little is said about tithing in the Gospels and beyond, so also very little is said about tithing prior to the Law, but what is said in both places is very instructive.

First notice, that both Abraham and Jacob lived prior to the giving of the Law of Moses, yet they tithed. How did they know to tithe? Who taught them to tithe? Why did they tithe? Did they tithe beyond these singular evidences of tithing? We know none of the answers to these questions, but what is evident is that there was obviously a solid tradition of teaching in this area, just as there was about animal sacrifices, which we also find no clear teaching on it prior to the Law of Moses. One only needs to read the accounts of Genesis 4 and Job 1, to know that God had obviously communicated Himself on the matters of giving and sacrificing, but had not called upon them to write any specific laws regarding them, until the time of Moses.

I believe what is supremely evident, from these passages, is that honoring God in tangible ways has always been a part of believing communities; and the tithe, under the Mosaic Covenant, was simply an outgrowth and more deeply defined manifestation of honoring God with one’s firstfruits. As the Law is fulfilled in Christ, and the entire Levitical system is abolished, along with the Tithe, the timeless principles of honoring God with our firstfruits continues on.

What appears from these accounts is that tithing, as with animal sacrifices, must have been a teaching from Yahweh, on the subject of “honoring Him,” to those who were removed from the garden, and such teachings were passed along generation after generation until the time of codifying these principles in the Law of Moses, and the development of a very elaborate Levitical/Tabernacle/Temple system. Tithing wasn’t new to them, it was finally given with clear definition in writing in the Mosaic Law, for a specific people and specific period of time.

Therefore, we are undoubtedly accurate in concluding that tithing/honoring/firstfruits was a timeless principle that God Himself taught the Patriarchs long before the giving of the formal Law. As such giving, in honor to God, is a timeless principle, just as sacrificing is. Paul picks up that theme as well in Romans 12:1,2.

As God gives to mankind all they need to sustain themselves in this world, He requests that man return a portion of it to His earthly representatives, and to those He cares for, as a way of reminding man Who is his source, and to honor Him for His provision of all things, as well as becoming an extension of the Creator’s love for mankind.

For this reason, while tithing, as a law, is abolished under the New Covenant, the same truths of honoring God with the first fruits of God’s provisions, and caring for the categories of peoples that the tithe cared for, still remain, therefore honoring the Provider would still be proper.

3. If Tithe = the 10th part, does this mean the New Testament believer should give a the 10th part to the Lord?

This is where I believe we must tread lightly. In all of the teachings of the New Testament nothing is directly mentioned to the new Gentile believers of giving a consistent 10th part anywhere. Yet, throughout the New Testament we are challenged to surrender the entirety of our lives - 100%, and not just a small 10% portion.

As all five categories of those worthy of receiving the tithe, the 10th part, exist in the New Testament, we would easily conclude that giving the 10th part would in no way violate anything inherently taught in the New Testament, and so in this sense it may very well be an acceptable approach, but what is even more difficult to answer, is the question of how the resources we have been given should be given.

Under the Law of Moses that question was quite simple. They gave it to the Levitical priests and they spent a portion on themselves. The Levitical priest gave a portion to the Aaronic priests and spent a portion of themselves, used a portion for the Feasts, and gave a portion to the poor, the strangers, the fatherless, and the widows. In the cases of Abraham and Jacob we conclude they, as with us, were led by God's Spirit in their giving.

In the New Testament we nowhere see any kind of teaching that implies the local Church is the place where the tithe is brought. They ate together, cared for the poor, the fatherless, and the widows directly, and those who taught them the Word of God, through giving directly to them.

In the very beginning the believers brought money to the apostles, who in turn gave it to the deacons, who then ministered to the poor, the fatherless, and the widows, but no one-for-one replacement of the Levitical priesthood was established.

Paul tells us that the other apostles had their needs met by the body of Christ, in 1 Corinthians 9:1-6

1...Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?2 If I am not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.3 My defense to those who examine me is this:4 Do we have no right to eat and drink?5 Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as *do* also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas?6 ***Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working?***

We are not certain how their provisioning came from the body, but we can tell it happened. What we don't see is any example of believers being told they must bring their tithe to their local Church so as to provide for the apostles.

In both 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians we observe Paul taking up a collection for the poor saints in famine ravished Jerusalem, and those monies were brought to the their local Church gathering, but this is the closest we see to the local Church being used as a depository of any monies.

What seems very evident is that the early believers, well taught in the Old Testament by all of the apostles, undoubtedly learned the principle of first fruits, honoring the Lord, and the principles of giving, and therefore understood the principle of tithing or honoring God had continued from the Old Testament into the New and yet were also taught to walk in the Spirit for His direction of when and where and amount of those monies should be given.

This point deserves further elaboration. Many have said that since the epistles do not directly mention the principle of tithing, and since Paul did not require his Gentile believers to walk in a Jewish law orientation, they were not taught to tithe. What this approach fails to consider is that on page after page of the New Testament the apostles write, assuming vast understanding of the Old Testament, on the part of his Gentile readers. This can only mean that the Gentiles believers were regularly and deeply being taught Old Testament truths. In fact, because the writings of the apostles took quite a while to become thoroughly circulated, we can assume that the bulk of teachings the early Church received, at least as far as teaching from Scripture goes, was taken from the Old Testament, and not the teachings of the apostles. This being the case we can be sure they knew well the principles of tithing, first fruits, and honoring the Lord with their substance. Because of this the apostles would not have needed to write specifically on the truths of tithing, but could simply mention giving in all five categories, knowing their readers understood the various focuses of provision, and the appropriate Spirit led approach to giving.

Keep in mind, wherever I refer to tithing under the New Covenant, I am not referring to a one-for-one connection to tithing under the Law of Moses. We're talking about the principle of tithing as applied by the Holy Spirit in each believer's life. It is the Spirit who will direct the giving of the 10%, or the 5%, or the 50%, rather than an individual telling people where and when it should be given, and rather than it being the same place for all believer's, as in the Old Testament. This makes tithing under the New Covenant a very different thing. If we were to attach any clear percentage to our giving, under the New Covenant, it would have to be 100%. Over and over again Paul clearly communicates that the believer gives 100% of himself, his money, and his stuff, to the Lord, for His direction at any time. To limit our giving to 10% would of itself dishonor the New Covenant and the work of Christ. We give what He gave...100% of our lives.

However, before we over spiritualize this, it seems important to remember that while Jesus gave 100% of Himself at the cross...I.e. a one time act...that wasn't the end of His giving to us. He regularly gives into our lives. If we aren't careful, we'll take this "I give 100% to God," to a place of virtual irrelevance. If it is not backed up by any regular giving to the work of the Lord, any regular giving the poor and needy, any regular giving to the place of gathering and the feast of the Lord you experience there, etc., then your 100% giving amounts to very little. God consistently, regularly, and faithfully gives. Our giving needs to mirror that same thing. Where is God calling you to regularly and consistently give? There will be a place if you ask Him.

I think it needs to be said here, that there is every reason to suspect that the apostles, while teaching the principle of tithing, very likely did not reference it to a specific percentage, nor used that term as a reference or defining point for their giving. It seems completely incongruous with the tenor of their teaching away from an Old Testament legalism, to think they explained the New Testament believer's giving in terms of tithing...at most the principle of tithing.

When Church Pastors attempt to communicate to New Testament believers, that the local Church is the equivalent of the Old Testament Storehouse of the Temple, they do so at great risk of over stating the New Testament. It is clear that each of the five categories of tithing still exist, but the element of Spirit leading must not be extracted from this teaching. Give where you are fed, give to the poor whom the Lord leads you to give to. These principles must be maintained lest an overly systems oriented approach be taught, and the liberty of the believer to walk in the Spirit is violated.

Paul is very clear to reject any notion of leaders pressuring their flocks to give to them. It must be something the people do from their heart, with the right motives, and led by the Spirit. Paul was so sensitive to this issue that in some cases, where he sensed wrong motives, he would not allow believer's and whole Churches to give anything to his ministry.

When Ministers seek to gain salaries, which represent fixed incomes for their ministry, they do so at the risk of stifling the believers, whom they oversee, in their Spirit led walk. Additionally, they risk failing the principle of divine provision through faith and calling. Yet, to encourage giving is never a wrong thing, and a resultant salary, from Spirit led giving, is not a wrong thing. The entire focus is on God's leadership, not man's pressure or manipulation.

Under the New Testament, the principle of provisioning the minister, at least as far as the individual believer goes, is a matter of that believer acknowledging ones who have been uniquely used by the Lord to feed their spiritual needs. How could this ever be limited to a single man or group of men, within the context of one local Church, under the New Covenant, when God uses many Ministers from many places to sow deep spiritual truths into the lives of believers.

We are in a day when God is going to lead more and more Ministers to travel itinerantly, as in the early Church, and as such they are worthy recipients of financial support, yet they will not be on any Church salary, nor even necessarily located regularly at any one given Church gathering. Their ability to travel and minister will be the provision of God through the giving of the saints throughout the body of Christ, as well as through their own labors, and other means. To demand that believers give 10% of their gross income to a given local Church, and then to provide for the other valid Ministries from their offerings, is to put too great a burden upon the body and risk the failure of provision for the traveling ministries of the body. This error must be corrected. If it hadn't been properly understood in the New Testament era it is perhaps doubtful we would have the rich legacy of the apostle Paul.

Add to this, the virtual abomination of failure to provide for the poor and needy within the body of Christ, through the tithe, and we have a major problem in the traditional/institutional Church. Most Churches know that they cannot even attempt to meet the needs of the poor and needy among them, while at the same time providing the salary for the staff, covering the maintenance needs of the building, paying the mortgage, and supplying all the materials for the various ministries. We have become so building and staff focused that the poor and needy are virtually ignored. This error must be corrected.

It is time for the body of Christ to move towards selling their buildings, releasing their staffs to walk in faith for God's provision, and returning to the simple approach of Church in the home. In this way full provision for the needs of the body will be made, while the extraneous money wasters will be eliminated.

Therefore, we conclude the believers were taught to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit for all giving. Believers must be re-empowered to follow the leading of the Spirit in every area of giving.

What is very very clear is that all five categories of focus for the tithe were taught in the New Testament and the early Church therefore made certain that appropriate provisioning took place for each of these five areas.

4. How then do we decide which Minister should receive our support?

In coming back to our subject of provisioning the Minister, we therefore conclude that those who regularly receive nourishment from a specific Minister or Ministers, will want to ask the Lord for the direction of their giving.

To fail to do this would dishonor the Lord, and could cause a loss of God's provision of teaching and equipping through the appointed Minister.

Some would say, ok, but how do I know how much to give the Ministers that feed me? Once again the answer would seem to be to refer that believer to the Lord for specific direction. In all likelihood His answer would be "Who feeds you the most?" Whoever regularly feeds you the most would be the largest receiver of your giving.

And how would I decide whether I give all of my giving to the Minister who regularly feeds my soul, or a portion of it to the poor and needy, and who gets which portion?

Again, the answer would come from a direct relationship with Jesus through His Spirit, but in all likelihood again it would probably come down to asking the question, "Who is regularly being brought before your life? Are you regularly being fed by your Minister? If so, then regularly return a portion of your first fruits increase. How often is the Lord bringing a specifically needy person before your life? If there is a regular flow of individuals being brought directly to your life by the Lord then you would want to regularly give a portion of your giving to that poor person or those poor persons.

Doesn't this mean the Minister would never receive a consistent amount from me, and could therefore not count on any consistency of giving? How could he ever hope to pay his mortgage or rent or utilities, etc.? The answer would be that this is up to the leading of the Spirit. There is nothing that mitigates against a consistent giving to a specific leader. It all depends on the Spirit's leading. Yet, for this minister, because he knows he is to place no pressure on anyone for his salary, he learns to walk in complete faith, and thus provides an outstanding witness of God's provision and true faith to the Church. His lack of knowing how God will lead the flock He Ministers to, from month to month, will ever keep him trusting in the Lord for His provision. Every minister needs to be set free from "salary bondage," into the liberty of ever growing and developing faith in God for His provision. In all likelihood he will need some form of occupation, in addition to his ministry of the Word. There is nothing wrong with this, unless the Lord leads him otherwise. It teaches the body to listen to the Spirit, and it teaches them faith for their provision as they watch their Ministers trusting God.

Once again it comes back to the principle of consistency. Whoever consistently feeds you should be receiving provisioning through you.

The world will always have poor people in it. The endless parade of the world's poor and needy will be brought, through the media, to your doorstep, but in each case, and even in those brought directly into your life, the believer must learn to ask the Lord for the portion of his giving to go in this direction. He will lead.

5. Is the Tithes the end of the story, or are Offerings still a factor under the New Covenant as well?

Because the apostles make no specific reference to either tithes or offerings, we conclude they had no intention of making any kind of separation of concept for giving. They simply taught them to give, and they emphasized the 5 primary focuses of giving, as taught under the Law, without any kind of legalism attached to it. It seems to me we are best to eliminate

either of these terms, when defining the believer's giving.

6. And what will be the outcomes in the believer's life who gives by God's leading?

Galatians 6:6-10

6 Let him who is *taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches*.7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, **but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life**.9 And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

2 Corinthians 9:1-15

1 Now concerning the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you;2 for I know your willingness, about which I boast of you to the Macedonians, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal has stirred up the majority.3 Yet I have sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this respect, that, as I said, you may be ready;4 lest if *some* Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we (not to mention you!) should be ashamed of this confident boasting.5 Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren to go to you ahead of time, and prepare your generous gift beforehand, which *you had* previously promised, that it may be ready as *a matter of* generosity and not as a grudging obligation.

6 But this *I say*: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and **he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully**.7 *So let* each one *give* as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for **God loves a cheerful giver**.8 And **God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work**.9 As it is written:

"He has dispersed abroad,

He has given to the poor;

His righteousness endures forever."

10 Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and **multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness**, 11 while *you are* **enriched in everything for all liberality**, which **causes thanksgiving** through us to God.12 For the administration of this service not only **supplies the needs of the saints**, but also is **abounding through many thanksgivings** to God,13 while, through the proof of this ministry, **they glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ**, and for *your* liberal sharing with them and all *men*,14 and by **their prayer for you, who long for you because of the exceeding grace of God in you**.15 Thanks *be* to God for His indescribable gift!

Philippians 4:10-19

10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your **care for me has flourished again**; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity.11 Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content:12 I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.14 Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress.15 Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning **giving and receiving** but you only.16 For even in Thessalonica **you sent aid** once and again **for my necessities**.17 **Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account**.18 Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus **the things sent from you**, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God.19 And **my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus**.

Notice in these passages the things that will result from giving in honor to the Lord and His body:

- a. Bountiful reaping for bountiful sowing. The principle of increase.
- b. Experiencing God's love for the cheerful giver.
- c. All grace abounding in your life.
- d. Having everything you need for every good work.

- e. Multiplication of the seed you sow into others.
- f. Enriched in everything.
- g. The saints needs are met.
- h. The saints thank God when their needs are met.
- i. The saints glorify God when we give obediently.
- j. Those who receive pray for those who give, and their prayers are answered.
- k. Love is increased in the body of Christ.

Therefore we close this study with a very practical question - "Who is God leading you to consistently and regularly give to and who is feeding your soul the Word of God? Who is He bringing directly before you with their needs and who is feeding you more frequently than other Ministers? Whomever you answer regarding that one or those individuals would be the one or ones you regularly make provision for, in honor of the Lord who has provided for all of your needs, especially your need for the Word of God.

Deuteronomy 8:1-10

1 "Every commandment which I command you today you must be careful to observe, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land of which the LORD swore to your fathers.2 "And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you *and* test you, to know what *was* in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.3 "So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, ***that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD.***4 "Your garments did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years.5 "You should know in your heart that as a man chastens his son, *so* the LORD your God chastens you.6 "Therefore you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him.7 "For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, that flow out of valleys and hills;8 "a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey;9 "a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing; a land whose stones *are* iron and out of whose hills you can dig copper.10 "**When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you.**

If we give as He directs we will inherit a good land and be blessed beyond our wildest imaginations.

We end with Proverbs 3:9-10 once again:

Proverbs 3:9-10

9 Honor the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: 10 So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.

Look how Paul says it in another unmistakable way:

1Corinthians 9:14 In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel. 15 But I have made no use of any of these rights, **nor am I writing these things to secure any such provision.** For I would rather die than have anyone deprive me of my ground for boasting.

If Paul is not writing and talking about the things he is, for the purpose of them provisioning his ministry, then what is his purpose? This is the crux interpretum of this entire passage and principle. Why should believers be taught on this subject? What is the biggest deal here? Making sure apostles and teachers get paid? No! Much much bigger than this, and if we can see the "much bigger thing," then we'll never again struggle over provisioning those called to a set apartness to

ministry.

His greatest concern is that they honor the Lord. To properly honor the Lord is to honor, by the provision of respect and financial provision, those whom He sends among them to feed them on spiritual truths in Christ. It's about this. For ministers...they are to do whatever it takes to cover their needs, and never do anything that could appear as manipulating the body for money, or ministering for money. But, for the body, if they receive spiritual truths, and don't honor the servants that bring it, they are not honoring the Lord who sent them.

Secondly, if they honor the Lord, then it releases the blessings of God into their lives, because God blesses those who bless Him. From Philippians 4:11,17,19 it is incredibly clear. They will have eternal fruit and the blessings of God, for following His lead in their giving. These are the ONLY reasons why any minister should ever minister on this subject to anybody in the Kingdom. The moment they speak on this subject with any kind of motive "to get" they have completely missed the approach God desires for this subject. The flock is to bless its teachers because it honors God, results in eternal fruit, and releases the blessings of God into their lives.

Has the Lord brought specific increase to you? Ask Him how to honor Him with it! God provides specific points of contact for our giving...it is at the times of specific increase, no matter how that increase manifests. These are not the only times to give, but they form logical points of connection to giving. Do you have a sudden increase of time...where does He want you to honor Him with it? Do you have a specific increase of stuff...where does He want you to honor Him with it? Have you just experienced a specific increase of money...where would He have you honor Him with it? Generally we can anticipate He will answer those prayers with leading us to give to one of the five categories we have discussed. The percentage of amount will be entirely up to His leading, and it helps us to fine tune our prayer lives by listening for that amount. The point is, moments of increase form moments of specific accountability, and opportunities to be led by His Spirit in giving.

If we will recognize these moments of increase as the logical time to seek Him in our giving then we will be trained to pray, listen, and act, towards the provisioning of His Kingdom and the avoidance of self centered living. God will bless this approach, and His Kingdom will experience the provisioning for all He wants provided for.

Let us learn to walk in these principles and see the increase of God yet more and more!