

In God We Trust
Part 1
"A Generous Heart"

(Managing the Stuff God Has Given to You)

Stats and Facts:

"If a person gets his attitude toward money straight, it will help straighten out almost every other area in his life." Billy Graham

The Barna Research Group conducted a study in 2005 that identified "five significant barriers to more generous giving." They are as follows:

1. People don't see how the money they give will make a difference in the world.
2. Not seeing a sufficient return on their investment.
3. Not realizing that the church needs money to be effective.
4. Ignorance about what the Bible teaches about God's expectations for Christians to give.
5. People feel they worked hard for their money and want to spend it on themselves.

The Barna Group discovered that only 4% to 6% of churchgoers practice the discipline of tithing.

What a generous heart is: Barnabas

Why was Barnabas generous?

- He understood the generous dept.

Romans 5:6-9 (NASB)

For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.

- He gave himself to God first.

2 Corinthians 8:3-5 (NIV)

For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will.

How was Barnabas generous?

- He was generous with his stuff.

Acts 4:36-37 (NASB)

Now Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement), and who owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

- He was generous with his time and talents.

Acts 13:2-3 (NLT)

One day as these men were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Dedicate Barnabas and Saul for the special work to which I have called them."

So after more fasting and prayer, the men laid their hands on them and sent them on their way.

- He was generous with his investment in people.

Acts 11:25 & 26 (NLT)

Then Barnabas went on to Tarsus to look for Saul. When he found him, he brought him back to Antioch. Both of them stayed there with the church for a full year, teaching large crowds of people. (It was at Antioch that the believers were first called Christians.)

What a generous heart is not: Ananias & Sapphira

How were they not generous?

Acts 5:1-11 (NIV)

Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. 2 With his

3 Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? 4 Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God."

5 When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. 6 Then the young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him.

7 About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. 8 Peter asked her, "Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?"

"Yes," she said, "that is the price."

9 Peter said to her, "How could you agree to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also."

10 At that moment she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband. 11 Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events.

Why were Ananias & Sapphira not generous ?

- They did not see how their money was going to make that big of difference.
- They did not think that the return on their investment was enough.
- They did not know that the church needed their money to move forward.
- They were ignorant about God's view of money.
- They figured that they had worked hard for the money and deserved it.
- They were more concerned about appearances than honesty.

Give yourself to the Lord first.

2 Corinthians 8:1-5 (NIV)

And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will.

Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright 1996, 2004. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, IL 60189. All rights reserved.

Quotations marked NIV are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version. Copyright 1978 by New York International Bible Society.

Scripture marked NASB95 are from the New American Standard Bible by the Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.