

English Transcript

Biblical Principles for Giving

Lesson 1: Eternal Perspective

Welcome to our GTN course titled Biblical Principles for Giving. This is one of our twelve core courses in our GTN curriculum for pastors and leaders in Senegal and Gambia. As you begin this self-paced study, please be sure to download, and if possible, print the course handout. The handout will be helpful for you as you listen to the course. The handouts are available in English, French and Serere for each course. The transcripts of each audio lesson may also be helpful for you. These are currently available in English, French, and Wolof.

As we begin all our training, we emphasize two important points.

First, we always teach to the head, heart, and hands. When we think of the Head, this is where we take in biblical truth. We will call this **Information**. Biblical truth should impact our hearts through deeper belief and conviction. We call this **Inspiration**. This Information and Inspiration should impact our lives. We should put these truths into practice. This represents our hands leading to **Transformation** into the likeness of Christ.

So, head equates with Information, the heart means Inspiration, and hands lead to Transformation.

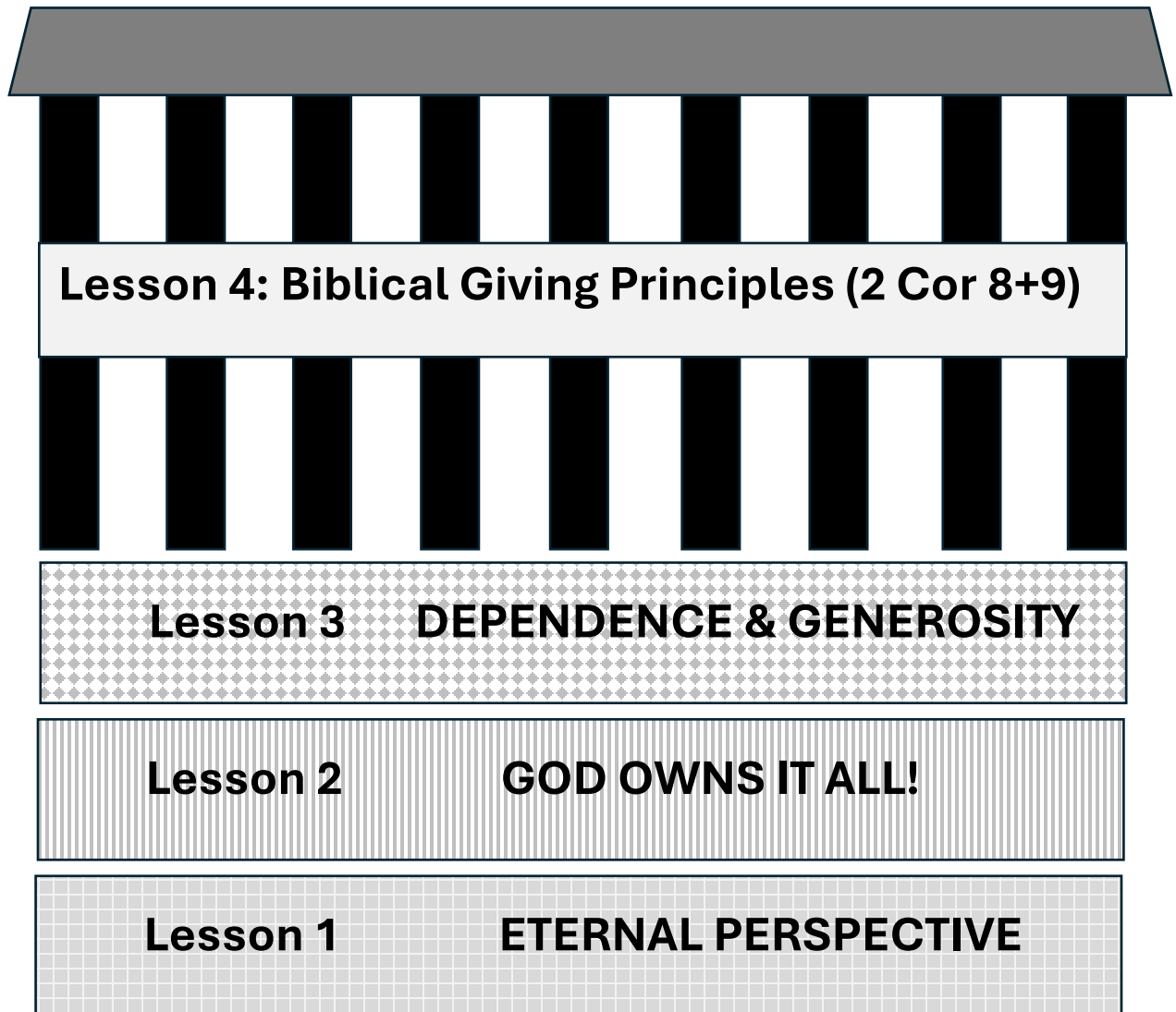
This also relates to the key verse for all GTN training, 2 Timothy 2:2. The apostle Paul was teaching Timothy, who was responsible for teaching others, who would be responsible for teaching others, and the cycle would continue.

So, as we consider this training, the goal is not just to impact your head, but it should impact your heart, which would then ultimately impact your life. You will be moved to train others in your church and community, who would then have a motivation to train others.

Please turn with me to page 2 in your handout as we look at the table of contents. You can see that there are only five lessons for this course. The first three lessons will provide a foundation for then studying two chapters that are filled with sound, biblical principles for New Testament grace-giving. Lesson four will be an extended study and discussing of these principles found in 2 Corinthians chapters 8 and 9.

On page 3, I have provided a diagram for this course that shows how Lessons 1, 2 and 3 provide the foundation of our biblical structure for giving. We must have an eternal perspective, understand that God owns it all, and grasp how the Old Testament principles of dependence on God and generosity can prepare for a new level of grace-based giving found in the New Testament. Lesson 4 provides the pillars of giving principles found in 2 Corinthians chapter 8 and 9 that complete the giving structure. We will use lesson 5 as a summary and discuss basic concepts of a giving plan that incorporates many of these principles.

A biblical structure for giving that will overflow in many acts of thanksgiving to God as we excel in this grace of giving. (2 Corinthians 8:7; 9:11-12)



As a result of completing this course, you can see the learning objectives at the bottom of page 2.

- Develop an eternal perspective toward wealth and possessions in this world and plan to invest them in God's kingdom work.
- Acknowledge that God owns all things and that He has placed you in the role of manager of His possessions to be used for His glory.
- Understand how giving the first and best part of your wealth and possessions in response to God's grace glorifies God, blesses the church, demonstrates God's love toward all people, and transforms you spiritually by God's grace.
- Define and begin to implement biblical principles for giving.
- Develop a plan for giving that will honor God, provide for your family, and lay up treasures in heaven.

Give some thought to which of these objectives are of the greatest interest for you. When we complete the course, we will review these objectives with an eye toward assessing how well this course help to develop your understanding, passion, and practice of these biblical giving principles.

With that as our introduction, let us begin our study in Lesson 1. The core principle that I would like you to focus on throughout this lesson is that we must maintain an eternal perspective relative to our giving, and all areas of life for that matter.

Let us start by reading our key verse, 1 Timothy 6:17-19.

¹⁷ As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.¹⁸ They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share,¹⁹ thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

The first question from this passage is "Who are the rich?"

1 Timothy 6:8 tells us that if we have food and clothing, we should be content. Might we say that the rich are those who have more than mere essentials of food, clothing, and shelter? Certainly, the rich are those who have more than the mere essentials of life. It is quite easy for each of us to look toward others and say they are rich, when in fact, by global standards, many have the essentials for life, so we might be considered rich when compared with those who lack these essentials. Many are rich in our world if we have more than the mere essentials of food, clothing, and shelter.

What are some other observations we can take away from this passage?

- We must watch out for pride that comes with riches or self-reliance due to our possessions.

- We must watch out for trusting or hoping in our riches and possessions.
- We must stay focused on being generous and sharing what we have with others.
- Our desire should not be to store up treasures for this world but rather invest for the future eternal kingdom.
- This aligns with Jesus' teaching to lay up treasures in heaven for an eternal reward that will never be taken away.

Here is a Principle to Live by: As a Christ-follower, we should use material possessions to do God's work in this world.

Paul does not condemn the rich or command them to get rid of their possessions. Instead, he encourages them to be good stewards of what God has provided and maintain an eternal perspective by investing in the kingdom of God and trusting in God and not one's wealth.

We must recognize that "Everything you have is a gift from God." (James 1:17)

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change."

God wants you to partner with Him in accomplishing His purposes on earth.

If Christ is truly your King, then you live in a kingdom different from the kingdoms of the world. Christ's kingdom has a distinct set of rules, a distinct set of values, and a different economy.

In Christ's Kingdom, we understand the purpose for earthly wealth is to invest it in eternal treasures. Do not focus on a return on your earthly investment. Those who make eternal investments will be content to receive their dividends in heaven.

To reinforce this principle, listen to what Jesus says in Matthew 6:19-21

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

In our world, how is success often measured? So much emphasis is placed on what we possess, our vocation, our accomplishments. People are drawn to power and influence. It is sad to say that people often find their identity and significance on these external things that will all pass away.

If someone is laying up "treasures on earth," how might you describe their life, values, and priorities? This perspective will focus on security, comfort, personal satisfaction, power, influence, and what others think about them. I think that 1 John 2:15-17 summarizes this mindset.

¹⁵ Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. ¹⁷ And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.”

The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life are another way of saying our focus is on laying up treasures on earth instead of heaven. Our focus is on ourselves instead of trusting in God.

What does it mean to lay up “treasures in heaven”? In contrast, our focus is on kingdom priorities with a desire to glorify God through not just our finances, but through all that God has blessed us with. When we focus on the kingdom and God’s glory we are building with gold, silver, and precious gems. When we focus on our own glory, we are building with wood, hay, and stubble. I take this principle from 1 Corinthians 3:11-15

¹¹ For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— ¹³ each one’s work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. ¹⁴ If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.”

When we serve and work for God’s glory and his kingdom, that is like building with gold, silver, and precious stones. When we are focused on our own agenda and our own glory, that is compared with building with wood, hay, and straw. The wood, hay and straw will be burned up in the end and reveal the heart motive behind our service. The gold, silver, and precious gems will survive the Lord’s test of our motives. Stay focused on doing all for the glory of God and His kingdom.

What questions can we ask ourselves to determine our true heart perspective on material possessions? We can first assess how we spend our time and money. We can check our bank statement and calendar. These two things will reveal much about what we treasure. We can look at where we serve and how we use the gifts that God has given us. We can assess our emotions. Are we continually stressed or anxious? Do we have a craving for more? Do we compare ourselves with others? Are we guilty of coveting what others have? Are we paralyzed with fear based on what we lack? Is there an overall spirit of discontentment in our inner being? These are just some of the ways to assess whether the love of money is beginning to take root and grow in our lives.

If Jesus were to analyze your life, what would he say your treasure is?

Jesus’ message applies to all who claim to follow Him. He was not teaching that it is wrong to accumulate material possessions; rather He was teaching that we should always use material possessions to pursue and promote God’s work in this world to advance His kingdom.

As a follower of Jesus, our values and priorities are continually being transformed. This transformation will impact not just our perspective on money and possessions, but every area of our lives is to be surrendered to the Lord.

I included pictures in your handout to illustrate these areas of your life that can be transformed to focus more on the kingdom (building with gold, silver, and precious gems) instead of laying up treasures on earth (building with wood, hay, and stubble).

Take a few minutes to consider each of these area in your life and to what degree you surrender each area to the Lord for His kingdom purposes and will.

- Your time.
- Your wealth and possessions
- Your spiritual health
- How and where you are serving
- Your love for your spiritual family (the church)
- Your marriage and biological family
- The influence of technology on your life
- How you view your job or vocation
- How you are using the spiritual gifts given by God
- The purity of your thoughts and words.
- I am sure you could add more categories to this list.

Which area(s) of your life have you experienced the greatest transformation from an eternal perspective?

Which area(s) of your life would you like to see even greater transformation by God's grace?

Listen to these facts of money found in the Bible!

- There are 2,350 verses in the Bible about money.
- One out of every six verses in Matthew, Mark and Luke are about material possessions.
- Half of Jesus' parables are about possessions.
- Jesus spoke more about money and how to use it than he did about heaven and hell, combined.

Based on these facts, we can see that this is an important topic.

Considering the importance of this topic, there are at least two primary misconceptions about money.

Consider this first misconception: Money is evil.

Read 1 Timothy 6:9-10.

⁹ But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

We see this also in Hebrews 13:5 ...

Keep your life free from the love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

And in 2 Timothy 3:1-2 ...

"But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. ² For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ..."

Is money evil?

No, the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Money is neutral.

Deuteronomy 8:18 tells us that God gives us the ability to create wealth.

"You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth"

What are some indicators for Christians that the love of money has captured their hearts more than living the will of God?

Look for levels of stress and anxiety. Feelings of discontentment. There may be a lack of love toward others. Pride, an unhealthy striving for more and even being stingy can be signs that the love of money may be taking root. Those who are workaholics, who also get caught in the trap of always comparing themselves with others or coveting what others have can also be danger signs. The love of money is not limited to just those who have lots of money. This sin can infect those with little money as well as everyone in between.

Money is not evil. The LOVE of money is a root of all kinds of evil.

A second major misconception is that money can buy happiness.

Read: 1 Timothy 6:6-8

Yet true godliness with contentment is itself great wealth. After all, we brought nothing with us when we came into the world, and we cannot take anything with us when we leave it. So, if we have enough food and clothing, let us be content.

King Solomons also said: *He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity. (Ecclesiastes 5:10)*

Jesus said:

For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? (Mark 8:36)

And the author of Hebrews wrote:

Do not love money; be satisfied with what you have. For God has said, "I will never fail you. I will never abandon you." (Hebrews 13:5)

Money cannot buy happiness or contentment. Contentment is an inner quality that is not affected by external factors. When we focus on our eternal relationship with God through faith in Christ, we recognize this is the source of true contentment and great wealth and blessing.

Here is a helpful definition of contentment: Being satisfied with one's circumstances, not complaining, not craving something else, and having a mind at peace. Looking back without regret, looking to the present without envy, and looking at the future without fear.

Have you ever been guilty of saying or thinking the following: When I finally get "x" or achieve "y," then I will be content or satisfied. Then I will be able to serve or give to God and others more freely.

When we think this way, we are basing our contentment, and even our identity, on things that are outside of us. These things can come and go. And if our contentment is based on them, our contentment will come and go as well.

Contentment is not a financial issue but rather a spiritual issue.

Let us look at the parable of Jesus about the rich man and the two barns.

Read Luke 12:13-21.

¹³ Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.” ¹⁴ But he said to him, “Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?”

¹⁵ And he said to them, “Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”

¹⁶ And he told them a parable, saying, “The land of a rich man produced plentifully, ¹⁷ and he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’ ¹⁸ And he said, ‘I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. ¹⁹ And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.”’ ²⁰ But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ ²¹ So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”

Let us make some observations from this passage.

How is the man described at the beginning of this parable?

He is wealthy and successful.

Did God object to his wealth and possessions?

There is no judgment made about the man possessing great wealth.

Where did the rich man make his mistake?

The issue seems to be his focus on his own needs and an unquenchable desire to acquire more for himself. There seemed to be a lack of concern or awareness for the importance of his spiritual condition.

Circle the number of times the man uses the words “I” and “my.” What does this tell us about the man?

At least eleven times in five verses, the man uses the pronouns “I” or “my.” This demonstrates who is at the center of his universe. He is the center of his life. His contentment is based on external possessions and accomplishments instead of his relationship with God and the condition of his heart before the Lord.

Why did God rebuke him?

The love of money had captivated his heart. There was no concern for his soul and the needs of others. He did not seem to realize or appreciate that God is the giver of every good gift, and those gifts are to be used for his glory.

We must understand that the sin in this story is not related to having wealth or even multiplying it. The sin is that this man used his wealth only for himself and his own comfort and happiness.

As we close this lesson, here are a few questions for you to reflect on.

What causes you to focus more on investing in the treasures of earth instead of having an eternal perspective regarding our wealth and possessions? Consider Jesus' teaching in Matthew 6:19-21.

Read the memory verse again (1 Timothy 6:17-19). Reflect on how living with this eternal perspective might have an impact on the life of your church and its impact on your community.

"¹⁷ As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.¹⁸ They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share,¹⁹ thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life."

What are some of the things that cause discontentment in your life?

What can you do to help avoid regrets over the past, envy in the present, and fear about the future?

Lesson 1 Principle:

Develop and work hard to maintain an eternal perspective.

As a Christ-follower, we should use material possessions to do God's work in this world.

When we continue with Lesson 2, we will look at the principle that God owns it all. We are managers not owners.