

MORE THAN DOLLARS & CENTS

Kyle Butt and John Farber prove that good things still come in small packages. You hold in your hand a message of which every generation needs to be reminded. *The Truth About Giving: God's Dare to Give Scripturally* is about God's bold challenge to get us to trust Him more than anything, including our money.

Little more than half a century ago, it was not uncommon to find churches that thought the topic of giving had no place in the church. Through honest study and teaching, most today have realized that money is one of the most frequent topics in Scripture. But in recent times, I am afraid that our giving is tied to helping elders meet their budgets. What a mistake!

Godly, generous, cheerful, planned, first-fruit giving is a part of spiritual growth and maturity. It is what we owe God even if the budget is already being met. Elders will have so much more to manage if their flock accepts God's dare!

The reader of this book will walk through a systematic study on giving using descriptive writing, rich resources, applicable illustrations and deep knowledge – all rooted in God's truth. For example, you are holding at least 120 teachings with scriptures referenced. Also, helpful

statistics are shared, as well as at least 30 illuminating illustrations. Most important, this book will help you to see God's purpose for blessing us and the greater blessing it is to give.

Multiplied good will come from this book when it is studied in a group. All who have taught on this topic have seen the power of positive peer pressure when generous givers comment on God's work in their past and passionately affirm His Word to be true. Let me share a true story.

A congregation decided to study the topic of giving in the adult classes for one month. During this time, the four sermons on Sunday morning would continue this theme. When the plan was presented to the adult teachers, one of them asked if the classes and sermons would be studying the same text because there surely would not be enough passages to cover the eight studies if we did not duplicate texts.

Can you imagine? That same church announced that this study was not about raising the contribution to meet a budget, but it was about encouraging all to grow spiritually. After the month-long focus, some realized for the first time that a congregation could do a yearlong study on stewardship and not study the same text twice.

After the month was over, one honest soul said: "I didn't believe you when you said this was a spiritual study, not simply about dollars and cents. Now that I have studied this for a month, I realize it. I have grown so much, and it is interesting that my contribution has too."

If you have not studied this beautiful topic of giving lately, do so. Give this book your best intentions and prayerful study. If you are a teacher, give a copy to each of your class members, and challenge them not to be the same person when the quarter is over.

No one has arrived. There is room for all to grow. And remember, this is not a challenge from a teacher or elders or authors, it is God's dare for you as you learn *The Truth About Giving*.

—DAVID SHANNON

THE TRUTH ABOUT GIVING

Most of us have seen it happen. The preacher stands up on Sunday morning and announces that his topic for the morning sermon is “Money.” Immediately, there is a collective sigh from the audience, as if to say, “Oh no, not the giving sermon again.” A glazed-over look fills the eyes of those in the auditorium who at least want to pretend to listen. And those who don’t care begin gazing around, fiddling with their watches, making faces at the babies in front of them, or even clipping their fingernails! It is sad that teaching about giving turns so many people off because it happens to be one of the most exciting teachings in the Bible.

What if we told you that, starting today, if you would implement one new strategy in the way that you live, it would change your life completely? What if we could offer you a simple formula that would ensure that God would open the windows of heaven for you and rain down upon you so many blessings that you could not manage them all? Would it excite you to know that the minute you get done reading this book, or even a few chapters of it, you could put into practice one small tip that would help bring a new happiness into your life?

You see, many people view giving in a negative way. They approach

the subject wondering what they are going to have to “give up,” but the biblical view of giving is very different from that. The Bible is replete with verses and illustrations that underscore God’s primary message about giving: “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). As cliché as that may sound, it is a life-changing thought that most members of the church have never truly considered. How do we know? That is easy to answer. To our knowledge, there has never been a legitimate study or survey done that has shown that average members of the church give any more than 4 to 6 percent of their income back to God. The irony of this is that we live in the most prosperous country in the history of the world. Average Americans spend approximately 25 to 30 percent of their income on housing, 10 to 17 percent on transportation, 11 to 13 percent on food, and 10 to 13 percent on insurance and pensions. Yet all this spending on ourselves has not brought us happiness, and it never will.

Many members of the church in the United States in the 21st century have fallen into the same trap as the Israelites of Haggai’s day. Haggai explained that his listeners had sown much and brought in little. He bemoaned the fact that his hearers were earning wages to put into bags with holes. And why were the Israelites suffering such financial and spiritual setbacks? God explained:

“You looked for much, but indeed it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why?” says the LORD of hosts. “Because of My house that is in ruins, while every one of you runs to his own house.” (Haggai 1:9)

God wanted to bless the Israelites of Haggai’s day, but He could not, because they were too worried about spending money on themselves and refused to consider giving back to God. How relevant Haggai’s message is today in a country where we spend 30 percent of our income on our own houses, but give less than 6 percent to God!

But let us come directly to the point of why we have written this book. If a person will give at least 10 percent of his total income back to God with a cheerful heart, that person will be happier than if he did not. And the more you give, the happier you will be. God does not lie, and He has said that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Yet very few people believe that. He is telling the truth. Let us show you.