

Giving

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[0 : 00] Discipleship 101, basic fundamentals of being a disciple of Jesus.! One thing to become a Christian, and then living and growing as a Christian.

! Because just becoming a Christian isn't the end of the story. There's the whole matter of walking, living, progressing, growing as a Christian. Some very, very just basic fundamental things.

Our relationship with the Word of God and prayer. Read your Bible, pray every day is not a bad summary. We're in a relationship with God.

It's more than just a human relationship, but it is very much like that. Relationships work by conversation, don't they? God speaks to us in His written Word, and we speak to Him in prayer.

And Daniel opened up the Lord's Prayer to us last week to remind us about that. Very helpfully.

Today we're going to take one particular aspect of discipleship, which is the aspect of money.

[1 : 03] So I've actually gone to the trouble of drawing a bag full of money, so you know what money is. As soon as you...

It is a difficult subject to talk about in a church, to talk about money. And you get various reactions. So one reaction might be, ah, that's what the American TV evangelists do.

They're just in it for the money. They make religion a way of getting money off poor people. And actually, usually people who can't afford it, I've seen this happen in Sri Lanka, is exploitation.

It's not a new thing. The Apostle Paul, back in the days of the New Testament, said, false teachers think that godliness is a means to financial gain.

But, he said, if you want to talk about gain, godliness with contentment is great gain. And he goes on to say, the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.

[2 : 01] So people are aware of that long ago. Here's another reaction that you might have. He's just going to make an appeal for more money, you know, for the church building fund or something.

And actually, you wouldn't be too far wrong. It is something we don't usually talk about. So we do need to talk about it. Churches can't run without money. And the Christian life does involve discipleship of money.

So we are going to talk about that. And reaction number three might be with this. And it seems to have gone off the bottom of the screen. I've earned my money.

I have plans for my money. And being a Christian is not going to touch that. I actually put £10 in the collection box just the other month.

Don't dare to suggest to me that my money is anything to do with being a Christian. So that would be quite a strong negative reaction. But just say, don't talk to me about money.

[3 : 02] I want to be a Christian. But I don't want you to talk to me about my money. And I would like to try and counter that reaction as we go through. So my plan is, first of all, to look at just a quick survey of Jesus and money.

Did Jesus ever say anything about money? Or is it just something that is being imposed on Jesus' agenda by people like me? Do a quick survey using Luke's Gospel.

Then, secondly, we'll look at God and money. And I've got two theological principles or two pieces of theology to put with that. And that's more or less all I want to do.

I'll try and bring you a conclusion at the end of that. So let's look at Jesus and money and then God and money. And I'm going to ask you to work hard this morning. So if you have a Bible, get your Bible out.

I'm going to make you work. We're going to look through Luke's Gospel. You don't mind working, do you? You didn't expect me to do all the work, did you? We're going to look in Luke's Gospel. And we're just going to flick through and see, did Jesus have anything?

[4 : 14] Did Jesus ever mention money? I mean, it's a good question, isn't it? Is it anything to do with Jesus? So Luke, and we'll actually go over into Acts, because Acts is also what Jesus continued to do and teach.

So first off, where was Jesus born? In a stable. So he wasn't born in a palace. So I think there's significance in that. He was born not as a rich person.

I just happened to flick on to this one, Luke 4, verse 18. Right at the beginning of his ministry, he says, this is something fulfilled.

The Spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. It's interesting that that idea of, it doesn't say exactly what sort of poverty, but poorness is in God's target, as it were, good news to the poor.

And then I flick along to chapter 5, verse 11, which is Jesus calling his first disciples. And we actually had this at the prayer time this morning.

[5 : 24] Luke 5, verse 11, Jesus calls his disciples, and they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything, and followed him.

I think that's significant, because they left their boats behind. That was their method of earning money. That was their means of employment. And Jesus seems that he has the right to call people, to leave their employment, their means of earning money, and follow him, which is quite a big thing to do.

You wouldn't do that, would you? You wouldn't go to somebody down London Road and say, forget what you're doing, leave it all behind, follow me, it'll all be okay. You wouldn't dare say that, would you? But Jesus dares to say that.

So I think that's significant. It points out for us, and flags up for us, that if we're going to be followers of Jesus, we have to be prepared for a very radical change in our lives.

There's a radical nature of being a disciple, and that includes, it even includes, our financial lives, our means of making money.

[6 : 38] So I flicked along through, and then I got to Luke chapter 16. Which is what was read. And it's worth stopping on this, because it's a very classic passage, where Jesus does talk about money, doesn't he?

The shrewd manager. The man who says, I'm going to be redeployed, or made redundant, and I look after my master's bills, and his invoices, and I deal with his creditors, and my plan is this, because I don't want to beg, and I don't want to go on a building site, and earn money, so I'll go, we will reduce the bills by half, or huge proportion, so that when I'm made redundant, I've got some mates on the outside, and they'll be welcome.

Come round, have dinner with us, why don't you? I remember what you did with our bill, that was amazing, etc. And the master, I can't imagine that the master thought this was a great idea, but he does recognize the shrewdness of his manager.

Doesn't he say it to, the master, 16 verse 8, the master commended the dishonest manager, because he had acted shrewdly. Might keep you on, actually, if you're going to be as shrewd as that.

And Jesus, the bit of it that Jesus picks up on, is that he says, this was shrewdness, this man really thought through the best way, to exploit his financial situation, so that he would have friends on the other side.

[8 : 20] And Jesus says, verse 9, I tell you, use worldly wealth, to gain friends for yourself, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.

And I think the point of that is quite clear. He's saying, our life here will come to an end, and then where will we be?

What will we have been invested in? Where will we be welcomed? Where will there be somebody saying, you did a really smart thing with your money, come and enjoy a feast here, which I think is what God would say.

And he's saying, take that long view about how it will be in eternity. In other words, the point Jesus is making, it seems to me, is that he's saying, you've got worldly wealth.

Now, do you be as shrewd as that manager in the way you use it, but with an eternal perspective, with an eternal perspective, thinking about the world to come.

[9 : 22] And he isn't commending dishonesty, because he goes on to say, whoever can be trusted with little can also be trusted with very much. Whoever is dishonest with very little will be dishonest

with very much.

So he takes the possibility that you might only have a little amount of money, but you can be honest with that, and you can be shrewd with that, and you can make good decisions with that. And I suppose this, by extension, says, you know, if you're sitting, thinking, oh, he's targeting the multimillionaires in the congregation, because he would like them to donate hundreds of thousands of pounds, and it doesn't affect me, because I'm not a multimillionaire.

Well, actually, I think this parable shows that even if you have a little, what you do with it matters. You know, nobody has too little so that they can say, well, my money is irrelevant to my discipleship.

Even if you've only got a little, use it shrewdly, use it for eternity. And then, on this same subject, Jesus goes on in verse 13 to say, no one can serve two masters, either he will hate the one and love the other, or will be devoted to the one and despise the other.

You cannot serve both God and money. And I think Jesus is putting his finger on a very significant thing about the power of money. It invites us to serve it, almost like a God, to worship it, to make it loom large in our lives, almost like a God.

[11:01] And he says, there is something deeply impossible about serving God and serving money. You can't do both of them. You can't have a foot in both camps.

And the Pharisees provide us an example of this. In verse 14, we're told that the Pharisees loved money. I think this is the only place in the Gospels that we're told this, and it's an interesting insight, isn't it, into these religious leaders.

A little bit like, you know, the, it's usually American, evangelist who has his private jet and his multi-million pound house and his swimming pool and his ministry.

and actually loves money. And the Pharisees seem to have that sort of attitude too. And they sneer at Jesus.

And he says, God knows your hearts. And I think this is a thing, isn't it? Even if we've got a small amount of money, it can still dominate our lives.

[12:13] That heart of the issue regarding money is the matter of the heart. It's not a searching topic. The Pharisees loved money, sneered at Jesus.

And I just, the bit that's gone off the bottom of the screen says, what about us? I think it is a challenge to us. Where is money in our lives? And then I went on to Luke 18 and got to, oh, I don't think this is right.

Hang on. I was looking for the rich young ruler. It's 18 verse 18. Another incident with Jesus that touches on the matter of money.

A certain ruler asked him, good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life? And then Jesus goes through with him his thoughts about the commandments and the man, I don't know whether it says in this instance that he was young, but in verse 21 he says, all these I've kept since I was a boy. And I wonder, is he just being honest? Is he being a little bit naive about himself? Is he being a bit superficial? I mean, he seems like a very respectable guy, but has he quite understood his own heart?

[13:33] Well, Jesus puts his finger on something now and says, now, let's just test you out on this. Suppose I were to ask you to give up all your money and follow me.

How would you respond to that? You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have, give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come and follow me.

And of course, this completely upsets the apple cart, doesn't it? Because the man finds that for all his observance to the commandments, really when it comes to it, he's not up for following Jesus because it touches everything, his wealth.

And if Jesus says, get rid of it all, then that's what he would have to do. And when he heard this, he became very sad because he was very wealthy.

And I just stopped to say that this would have been completely counter-cultural in those days because having wealth would have been seen as just pure and simple, a sign of God's blessing.

[14:39] You know, if you're a wealthy person, you're right with God and God is on your side because he's given you all that money. And Jesus says, well, it doesn't really work like that.

Verse 24, how hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God. Indeed, it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone else, for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.

And you see all the disciples and everybody listening going, what? If rich people aren't in the kingdom, who can be saved? And Jesus said, what is impossible with man is possible with God? It's all miracle. Discipleship, says Jesus, can be focused onto this matter of leaving everything. We're going to sing later, surrendering everything and following Jesus. And if you've become a Christian, you will have faced that and you will have accepted that.

[15 : 43] You will have said at some point, all that I am and all that I have, Lord Jesus, I give it to you. You wouldn't have become a Christian if you hadn't faced that.

But if you've been a Christian for any length of time, it's always worth revisiting that understanding of the radical nature of what it is to be a Christian.

Nothing is impossible with God, says Jesus. And then Peter pipes up, ah, well, actually, we have left all to follow you.

And Jesus says, yes, you have. Now, in Mark's Gospel, he says it in a slightly different way, but in Luke's Gospel, he says, no one who has left home or wife or brothers or sisters or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God will fail to receive many times as much in this age and in the age to come eternal life.

I guess that's the nearest Jesus comes to a sort of health and wealth teaching. He says, you have given everything up in principle. You know, the Lord might give you, you offer it all to him, he might give most of it back to you.

[17 : 05] But in principle, you've offered it all to him. And he says, you won't be a loser. You will receive many times as much in this age.

And I think we have to be cautious what Jesus meant. He didn't mean if you give up a hundred pounds, you will receive a thousand pounds back. That would be health and wealth teaching. But what he is saying is you won't lose out. I think as an example, if you've, well, let me put it in the first person.

I've had the privilege, as many of you know, to go abroad serving the Lord over many years. And it's just amazing that I've discovered brothers, sisters, as it were, spiritual children, friends, homes, that I never realized I had.

It's been a gain and a remarkable one. And I think that's the sort of gain that Jesus is referring to. And then he says, and that's not all, we're actually looking for the distant future for glory and there will most certainly be gain in the future.

[18 : 27] You won't lose out. You will gain, although maybe not quite in the way you might expect. And then moving over to Luke 19, we have Zacchaeus, the tax collector.

This is the guy who was short and couldn't see over the top of the crowd and he climbed a sycamore fig tree to see Jesus. That's in chapter 19.

And I ask the question, what about, how did meeting Jesus affect Zacchaeus with regard to money? And he, it's interesting in verse 8, he says, Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, look Lord, here and now I give half my possessions to the poor and if I've cheated anybody out of anything I will pay back four times the amount.

And it's interesting that the first response, the first thing that gets touched in his life is his money. Interesting, isn't it? I read somewhere and I couldn't find the reference that if becoming a Christian hasn't touched your wallet then there's something a bit suspect about what's actually happened to you.

I mean, for Zacchaeus that was the first thing that he responded, wasn't it? I'm going to give money away. And Luke 19, the parable of what now says the ten miners, that's usually, it's usually got talents, isn't it?

[20 : 03] Is that how we know this one, the parable of the talents? In Luke 19, the people who are given money and I won't stop very long on this, but it was to be invested and the guy who gets criticized is the one who failed to take the risk of investing in his master's work and that's there in Luke 19 verse 22.

I will judge you by your own words, you wicked servant. You knew, did you, that I am a hard man taking out what I did not put in and reaping what I did not sow. why then didn't you put my money in deposit so that when I came back I could have collected it with interest?

He says, you know the story so I won't try and go all through it, but he was one man who was given something that he could have invested.

It wasn't that much but it was something and he failed to invest that in his master's kingdom and I'm always shocked that Jesus says, you wicked servant.

He doesn't say unimaginative or risk averse. He says, there's something quite deeply wicked about failing to invest in the Lord's kingdom when you had the opportunity.

[21 : 28] There we are. And then flicking on through Luke's gospel we got to chapter 21 and picked up the bit about what used to be called the widow's mite in my translation it says the widow's offering.

Do you remember this one? Of the Jesus going into the temple in his last days of earthly ministry and looking for fruit amongst his ancient people in the city of Jerusalem which is supposed to be the joy of the whole earth, the example of how things ought to be done and he comes to look for anything that's commendable.

And the only thing that he finds is something to do with money and it's not actually the rich people putting their gifts into the temple treasury chapter 21 verse 1 but he sees a poor widow putting in two very small copper coins and this is all that she had to live on and she puts that into the temple treasury and Jesus says that, that's what I was looking for.

That's the thing. That's commendable. That's spirituality. That's the fruit I've always looked for.

Forget about all these rich people putting in their tax deductible donations.

That's the thing there. So, Jesus does teach about money, doesn't he? And in some quite surprising ways. And if we went on to the early church which is, now, I flipped on into the book of Acts and there's things about money there.

[23 : 10] There's Acts chapter 4 where it says in verse which is actually chapter 2 verse 32, isn't it?

Oh dear, I've mixed the numbers up. It's actually chapter 2 verse 42. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship and it says in verse 44, all the believers were together and had everything in common.

They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. So, their view of money changed in the early church. They shared things.

It affected their wallets. They noticed who was in need and they were prepared to sell and give and then, without getting too far into it, it then leads to the Ananias and Sapphira, you remember?

This is to do with money. It's actually not that they didn't give enough but they pretended they'd given more than they had and that was treated very seriously. They died on the spot.

[24 : 24] I mean, that's shocking, isn't it? You know, imagine we have a church members meeting and we go through the accounts and everybody says what they've given and somebody says, makes out they've given more and, you know, 999, ambulance, they're dead.

Unbelievable. So, we had a quick look at Jesus and money and if we had thought or if we'd come with the idea that Jesus actually never said anything about money and money is not really relevant to the Christian life, I think we've seen enough to say, actually, that's not right.

Jesus said a lot about money and money is a big factor. It can grab our hearts and when we become Christians, that should all change in very particular ways.

Okay. So, now, having looked at Jesus and money, let's look at God and money and I've got two pieces of theology. That's a pretty grand way of saying this is number one.

Number one, about God now. God is our creator and provider in every way and he delights to give generously to us. Okay.

[25 : 43] Piece of theology number one. God is our creator and provider in every way and he delights to give generously to us.

He even gives the rain. You've just noticed it started raining. So, I've done a wonky sort of arrow from heaven to us. God loves to give and I could multiply text but I'm sure I don't need to multiply text to convince you that what I've said is true.

The earth is the Lord's and everything in it and from Acts 17 he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else.

So, basic thing about God he is the giver. Everything we have is a gift from God.

A generous gift. We are swimming through God's generosity with every step that we take every breath that we breathe and what a huge truth this is.

[26 : 51] Nothing is our own it's all given by God. So, we're not freeholders we're tenants. Everything we have is on loan.

It is not ours by right. It is not ours shove off God that's nothing to do with you. It is ours as gift on loan as it were from the real owner.

So, that includes our life and breath given by God. It includes our bodies and souls given by God. It includes our health and well-being.

Our health is a gift from God. Our well-being is a gift from God. He can do with it as he pleases. It is not a right and inalienable right. It is a gift for which we should very often be grateful.

Our history in God's providence is a gift from God. You know, you might be thinking oh, I was born in the wrong place. I was born at the wrong time. I was...

[27 : 57] All of our past is a gift from God. He planned all of that and our future is in his hands.

It's not up to us to tell God what we want and demand it. Our future is in his hands. It's all gift. Our gifts and abilities are gifts from God.

Our time and our talents are... What it says on there is our families are a gift from God. If we've got children they're a gift from God.

If we haven't got children that is God's gift to us. If we've got grandchildren they're a gift from God. We are swimming through God's complete generosity to us.

And so just following on from that really important point being ungrateful for his provision is a really serious sin.

[28 : 59] beginning of Romans Paul depicts the human condition and he says this is the sad truth about humanity.

Having received so much and having received everything they did not glorify him as God nor give him thanks. They did not glorify him as God nor give him thanks.

Give thanks with a grateful heart. Give thanks to the Holy One. We thank now thank we all our God with heart and hands and voices who from our mother's arms has blessed us on our way.

It's just interesting when Paul says the deep problem with humanity he doesn't say it's the sins of sexual immorality he doesn't say it's the abuse of power he doesn't say it's the failure to steward creation he says it's the sheer irreverence of ingratitude to the great creator who has provided us with everything and to fail to give him thanks for his generosity is the deep sin and it links with worshipping created things rather than the creator so I just want to stop and say please repent of that sin if that's you if you've never even thought that that's what you owe to God then turn around and come say sorry to him and seek a way back I do want to focus on the particular gift of money and so this is sort of focusing down in

Deuteronomy it says remember the Lord your God for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth very significant text isn't it if you have wealth remember the Lord your God because he enabled you to produce wealth it's a loving gift from God and points us back to our relationship with the giver gifts are always meant to do that aren't they they're meant to confirm express re-establish a relationship with the giver it's not just a transaction it's a relationship and this also points out another deep sin the sin of idolatry making something else God in our lives making money an object of our love and security something which we put into a compartment put God outside it but this is the compartment that we're focused on something which looms largest in our lives tear down barns build bigger ones you fool this night your life is required of you and Jesus saying there's something quite fundamental here you cannot love

[32 : 11] God and money so which of those two are we worshipping and serving the created things or the creator so just point that out again and of course the biggest gift while we're talking about God giving is the gift of Jesus our redeemer the greatest gift of our creator to us is Jesus his son for God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life and while we're thinking of God's generosity let's let's put this at the sort of top of the the top of the picture the gift of Jesus I mean God is a giving God and here is giving par excellence God the son the radiance of God's glory the exact representation of his being as it says the father did not withhold his son he spared not his son but gave him for us that's amazing isn't it and the son gave his life he freely consented to become a blood sacrifice sacrifice and if you think of it and I'm not going to go too far into this but the whole plan of salvation is full of the idea of giving and gift and generosity and love and grace the free gift of salvation it's all gift and amazingly so and I would just like to commend to you the gift of

Jesus Christ to sinners what a precious gift who would be so callous and spiteful as to refuse the gift of Jesus as saviour who would do that we cannot adequately express thanks for this inexpressible gift as it says anyway God delights to give generously that was point number one now

point number two there is a loop that can be closed so I've drawn a clunky arrow in which it came down and then goes back up again this seems to be a principle we return he gives to us and we return to him so one way you can do that is just saying thank you isn't it which is what we've done in our songs this morning in our prayers we can give him thanks Jesus did that he broke the bread and he gave thanks that's a significant thing to do isn't it everything

God created is good and nothing is to be rejected if it is to be received with thanksgiving if you look at that word thanksgiving it sort of colours the new testament we're thankful people there's thanksgiving going on all the time in the Christian life we're offering a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving thankful people there's some pictures of thankful people couldn't quite get the hands in the right order but I mean that's what Christians are supposed to be isn't it thankful people I'm coming on to money in a minute but I'm just saying we return to God thanks for all the good gifts he's given to us and we can not only give him words but we can give him stuff so the whole Moses system has got ways of thanking God built into it offerings first fruits and tithes and without getting too technical about it I my sort of a rough view of it is that there are thank offerings so they're built into the sacrificial system there are sacrifices which are not primarily to deal with sin but to say thank you to offer to

God thanks and that's what I think is referred to in Hebrews 5:1 where the priest offers sacrifices for sins and gifts we're able to give thanks to God and he doesn't say I think I'm interested in that he says that is very acceptable I'm very pleased that you thank me there's first fruits and again without going into it too far I presume!

this is a token proportion where you say here's my harvest it's all coming here's the first bit of it I thank you for all of it and to thank you for all of it I give you the first fruits and I give that back to you here are the first apples that come on the tree here are the first pears that come on the tree here is the first wheat that we harvest and I just interested that there's a step of faith there isn't it because if you give the first bit is there any guarantee that there's going to be a second and a third and a fourth apple on the tree that's interesting isn't it I presume this is the way that it worked that before you had all the rest of it you give the first bit to the Lord there's an act of faith there and I think that is not entirely irrelevant to Christian giving first of all I give to the Lord as an act of faith trusting that he will provide the rest of the harvest or whatever it is give to

[37 : 53] God before you do everything else you know you're working out your accounts da da da da da but first thing let's get this bit I'm definitely going to be giving to God whatever else and another thing about money is that it has power and it's a useful stuff it is useful within God's created world I suppose if I'm not an economist but I think that it would be reasonable to say that it allows the products of fruitfulness and labour to be moved around for goods and services so I make a table there sell it and with the proceeds I can send that to somebody to buy a sack of rice thousands of miles away so money allows that sort of transport of benefit it can do stuff it can procure food it can procure shelter it can procure clothing it's an orange t-shirt whose is that then it can keep people alive and it can also eat up people's hearts money's powerful

I hadn't realised this until I went through there's a power in money we have to understand that a power for good and a power for evil just coming to tithes in the Old Testament there's a complex system built into the ancient economy which invests in God's kingdom here and now I'll just say that again it's built into the Old Testament so that worship to the eternal God could invest in God's kingdom in the here and now so what did the tithes do 10% of income given to God now what happened to that 10% supporting supporting the Levitical priests who had no land so they depended for their income on the gifts of everybody else support for the poor there was no welfare state supporting things like the expenses of the temple that was all done on donations and it seems to me that just looking at our

Old Testament system it involves faith it involves people sort of looking at the world and thinking that the things that enable God's kingdom and his work to operate are as real as buying petrol for the car and food for the weekly shop I mean they're real needs and God's kingdom has needs that money can supply and I'm just going to do you a quote here which shows I was a bit surprised at this how significant in the Old Testament tithes were this is a quote from Malachi will a man rob God how are we robbing God in tithes and offerings you are under a curse because you are robbing me bring the whole tithe into the storehouse test me in this says the Lord Almighty and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there is not room to contain it it's a very striking text isn't it you've forgotten about tithes this is Old Testament if you

got that right you could test me in this see how much I honour the faith of your giving and he says in this context I'll pour out so much blessing there's not room to contain it I'm not going to pin that text on us that's Old Testament but there's something there isn't there the New Testament doesn't have a system of tithes we live in a different sort of economic situation but it does expect that we give to God in generosity that's still an expectation where was I going with this in the New Testament there's giving to the poor there was no welfare state then we have a welfare state so that's somewhat eclipsed that giving to the

Lord's people there were no needy among them in those days giving to the Lord's work and that's the most obvious relevance to us we give to the Lord's work I mean relief agencies like giving to tier fund which we do as a church and you might do as individuals to the work of missionaries people who've gone from one country to another to spread the gospel we support Victor and you did and we were just thinking on Thursday of which other missions to support and perhaps you do that individually we certainly do that as a church the support of ministries and I do want to point out the ministry of the church that we are in today we shall need in the future for whoever is ministering to have accommodation and they will need food on the table they will need a roof over their heads that is just the way it is and the

[43 : 28] Lord will largely provide for that through the giving of the Lord's people and I just point out to you the stark reality that we used to the church used to own two houses the two next door which got sold the church doesn't own any accommodation property if we are to provide accommodation property in today's prices we're looking at somewhere between three quarters of a million and a million pounds I don't have that the church doesn't have that secretly stashed away this is something we're going to have to pray about and this is something that we're all going to have to see what our contribution is I'm just telling you the reality of it we need we believe that the right way forward with more and more admin tasks is to employ an administrator For church members we'll be bringing you some more details of this before too long but we've been thinking about this we've had administrator type people in the past

Christina we had Lindsay we had Annika and the deacons and elders believe that we need to do that again and we need to pay that person at the moment and David will correct me if I'm wrong our funds are sort of 80,000 somewhere around that but we're just gradually getting a little less each month am I correct in saying that and as we look forward we need to pay in the future more than was paid to staff in the past and we need another member on staff we're going to need to pray and consider and this is going to involve money our church building mercifully we have a church building and those of you at prayer meetings a few weeks ago might remember that I said there's I think five impossible things and one of the impossible things was to get the boiler fixed for a reasonable amount of money and we actually have had the boiler fixed for a reasonable amount of money haven't we it's hiding behind that cupboard what a remarkable answer to prayer but there's other things on the building that need doing so there's issues with the roof as we go further back these will need money and this involves the Lord's people we're giving money away for mission and that's money given by us so let's draw to a conclusion we looked at Jesus and money we looked at God and money and my two principles were that God gives generously to us and that we can complete the loop by giving back generously to the Lord that's really the sum of it so to conclude let's be appreciative appreciate how much you've been given and be explicitly thankful to God it's a good reminder isn't it count our blessings be thankful for them and settle the principle that to be grateful touches right at the heart and we suddenly realise we can let go of money and we can give it back to the Lord and we need to have faith what will happen if I give money to the Lord I won't be able to meet all my bills well obviously be prudent but you do need have faith and be prepared to let money go and there's quite a bit about proportionality so the tithe was 10% where you say well I haven't got enough money to give a tithe of reasonable guideline and it talks about giving proportionately and not sort of every now and again haphazardly but sort of regularly thoughtfully and here's a thought maybe it's a while since you went over your finances maybe this coming week go over your finances just see what the Lord has blessed you with and just check whether there's any way that you might want to adjust your giving in line with that the New Testament doesn't say you have to tithe but I think it's not a bad guiding principle you could you know not a bad guiding principle and the Lord does think it's actually very important that we invest in his kingdom that we invest in the distant future!

[48 : 25] And thereby to join many Christians over the centuries who have proved in their own experience that as they trust the Lord with their money he is faithful to us and maybe even like in Malachi pour out a blessing so great that you can't contain it let's sing something a ending ending ending