

Living to Win

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Everyone Needs to Give

From Ronald L. Dart's *Born to Win* Notes

Can we give to God? Why on earth is a man expected, even commanded to give to God? We are, you know. But before I explain that, let me get one thing out of the way.

If you are one of those people who gets upset when a minister talks about money, or if you assume the guy is just trying to line his own pockets, I have one request of you: Please do not send any money to this ministry. Let's get that idea off the table, because it may be standing between you and something that can change your life. Just hear me out, okay? This article is for you, not for me.

Now, back to my question. Why is a man expected, even commanded, to give to God? It is certainly not for God's benefit. Consider what he had to say in one of the Psalms: "Hear, O my people, and I will speak, O Israel, and I will testify against you: I am God, your God. I do not rebuke you for your sacrifices or your burnt offerings, which are ever before me," [i.e., I am not telling you to stop giving offerings.] But know this: "I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens, for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird in the mountains, and the creatures of the

field are mine. If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the world is mine, and all that is in it. Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats? Sacrifice thank offerings to God, fulfill your vows to the Most High, and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me" (Psalm 50:7-15 NIV).

God is proposing a deal. Give to God as a part of your life, call on him in the day of trouble and he will bail you out. Then he says, this is the deal: "I will deliver you, and you will honor me."

Note well which comes first. We honor God because he has delivered us. It is not the other way around. Is this clear? If the offerings are not for God's benefit, for whose benefit are they commanded?

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Obviously, for the giver. For everyone needs to give. No matter how rich, no matter how poor. We have a need to give. Now, how does this work in practice? Let me tell you a story: In ancient times, a band of warlords came down and plundered the old city of Sodom and carried off their goods and a lot of their people—to be their slaves. But there was a problem. One of the people they carried off had a near kinsman named Abraham. Abraham

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Charitable Giving . . .

Many options are available to increase your contributions to charities. Some strategies are simple, others require the assistance of a professional such as an attorney or tax advisor. You don't need to be wealthy to help. In fact, you can even make substantial, tax-favored gifts without taking a hefty bite out of your current income or assets. All it takes is a little planning. As a part of your team, CEM stands ready to help you make charitable gifts that may provide these benefits and more. Call Paula Hughes at 1-888-BIBLE-44 for more information.

Weeding the Garden

By C. Roderick Martin, a CEM Board Member

Another Passover season has come and gone. New friends were made; old friends were lost. Fields were planted; crops were harvested. Many were married; many were divorced. Many were born; many died. All things were as they always have been. This year will be as the last. Moreover, those without knowledge shout the familiar refrain, “Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation” (2 Peter 2:4).

The Church continues to splinter and scatter into groups too many to number. Many grow weary and confused—days pass without hope. Yet, a few are prosperous and content. Wealth is synonymous with God’s blessing and success is measured by the thickness of one’s wallet, not by the strength of one’s character. Evangelists, like snake oil salesmen of old, peddle the Word of God and lure the poor, the lonely, the disenfranchised, and the elderly with promises of riches if they but “sow the seed of faith” (send money). Then God will answer all their prayers. God is now a commodity. It is an extremely lucrative business.

The world is filled with violence, disease, famine, earthquakes, changing weather patterns, hubris, and greed on a scale that rivals ancient Rome. We are witness to the beginning of the Olivet Prophecy, yet many believe Christ is delaying his coming. Is Jesus delaying his return or is God weeding his garden? God said in the last days there would be

a great falling away. Some will give in to seducing spirits. Some, speaking lies in hypocrisy, will have their minds seared (1 Timothy 4:1-2). Some will become proud, high-minded (2 Timothy 3:1-4).

We go to church each Sabbath. We tithe our ten percent. We keep the holy days. We prophesy in the Lord’s name. We give to the poor. We do many wonderful works. We know what is required and we do only what is necessary. Yet, Jesus may look at us and say, “I never knew you” (Matthew 7:22-23). Each night on bended knee we say our prayers (albeit they may have become repetitious, hasty, and often selfish), asking God for his guidance, his forgiveness, his mercy. Yet the next day, out of the same mouth, we disparagingly say of this person or that person, “How could he say such a thing? How could she do such a thing? These are not the actions of a Christian. They obviously do not have God’s Holy Spirit.” Is it not telling that we all are very good at pointing out the faults of others, but lack the introspection necessary to see our own shortcomings?

Because the Bible is filled with allegory, simile, personification, analogy, metaphor, symbolism, and parable, it is not literal. Many times Jesus taught using parables that often require explanation. Within these parables, Jesus used similes and metaphors that relate to agriculture: vine dressing, grafting, harvesting, and pruning. Even the holy days occur during harvest seasons. In the fifth chapter of Isaiah, God employs

a lengthy parable to compare his people to a vineyard. He plants this vineyard, cultivates it, but it bears no fruit. If you are curious what God did as a result, read the parable. Numerous prophecies pertaining to the “last days” suggest that prior to Christ’s return, a weeding of his garden takes place. Many are tried by fire and refined as silver (Zechariah 13:8-9). Many are purified and made white (Daniel 12:10). Again, in Matthew 13:24-30, Christ uses simile within a parable. It is easy to spot a simile. Whenever it says, “is like,” it is a simile, which means similar to something. In this parable of “The Wheat and Tares,” Christ once again uses agricultural terms. In verses 36-43 Christ explains the parable. Christ chooses agricultural terms, as he did in many parables, because the people of that generation could easily relate to them. Certainly, Christ knew subsequent generations would easily grasp their meanings as well.

All of us have looked up into the heavens on a starry night, in awe of the vastness. Indeed, the known observable universe spans 93 billion light years. Traveling at the speed of light (186,000 miles per second), it would take us 93 billion years to make the journey. Einstein said nothing is faster than light, but that Spirit within us communicates with his Spirit through prayer at speeds far, far greater. All of us should ask the question of ourselves, “Do I honestly believe the mind behind this creation and the incom-

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organized a private army, went after them, destroyed their army, and recaptured the people and the booty they had taken (Genesis 14).

As Abraham returned from battle, he was met by the King of Sodom and another person named Melchizedek, a priest of the Most High God. The priest brought out bread and wine (sounds a lot like communion) and blessed Abraham with these words. They are important.

“Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand” (Genesis 14:18-20). Then Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. Abraham had called on God in the day of trouble. God had delivered him. Abraham now honored God with the tithe, a tenth of all of it. It is noteworthy that what Abraham was tithing on was the spoils of battle.

After this, the King of Sodom said to Abram, “‘Give me the people and keep the goods for yourself.’ But Abram said to the King of Sodom, ‘I have raised my hand to the LORD, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth, and have taken an oath that I will accept nothing belonging to you, not even a thread or the thong of a sandal, so that you will never be able to say, ‘I made Abram rich.’ I will accept nothing belonging to you but what my men have eaten and the share that belongs to the men who went with me—to Aner, Eshcol and Mamre. Let them have their share” (Genesis 14:21-24 NIV).

Abraham took the tenth for God off the top, before any distribution of

the goods. But the important thing to notice is that Abraham’s tithe was a response to the declaration that God had given him the victory. He gave that tenth to the man who represented God at that time and place.

Now, about this tenth. Is it commanded, or is it voluntary? So what about these things called tithes and offerings to God? Are they commanded? Yes. Are they voluntary? Yes. Is that a paradox? Not really. Every aspect of the Law of God is voluntary at the personal level. At the community level, there may be enforcement. If you kill someone, you will be prosecuted. If you don’t give to God, he has no IRS, so he won’t come and take your money. But remember how that psalm we read concluded: “. . . call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me.” But when he blesses you and you do not honor him, you fall out of that relationship. You are on your own. How’s that working out for you?

Now, let’s get something else out of the way. What if you are too poor to give? Consider an incident Jesus observed and note what he said about it: As he looked up, Jesus saw the rich putting their gifts into the Temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. “‘I tell you the truth,’ he said, ‘this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on’” (Luke 21:1-6 NIV).

To better understand God, you need to know how he looks at your gift—at the raw amount, or the proportion? But the meaning of this passage does not stop here. Learn

from the *FREE CD, Everyone Needs to Give*, what the relationship is between the giver and God. How does God have the ability to stretch what you have to meet your needs when you trust him enough to tithe? Is giving to God done only when one can afford it, or do the poor have the same need to give as one who has been bountifully blessed? Learn how God is fair and equal by proportionate giving, and what proportion he requires of us as our obligation to him.

Call CEM today at 1-888-BIBLE-44 to get your *FREE CD of Everyone Needs to Give*. Or check the box on the enclosed card and return the card to us. This message will revolutionize your thinking and put you on the path to being blessed of God.

YEA Lesson Books Improve Feast Attendance

Children need to be taught the Word of God. They are the church today and tomorrow. Teachers with a servant’s heart, willing to give youth classes time and energy, are making an eternal investment in each child and their own eternal salvation.

Improve Feast attendance with full-color YEA Feast books for five age groups (children three to 20) filled with exciting classes. Each step is carefully laid out. Student activities to do before and in class make each lesson long remembered. Call CEM at 1-888-BIBLE-44 to order (reduced price for bulk orders). CEM prints only what is ordered. The cut-off date is August 24, 2012. Order today to insure your teachers have enough time to prepare.

CEM Moves Forward with International Work

by Paula Hughes

Christian Educational Ministries has had so much good news and many positive developments on the international front, we feel you should share in our joy. CEM is delighted to be part of the ministries mentioned here. However, we understand well that all the glory belongs to God for blessing these outreach ministries.

Michael Deering has been working in the Andhra Pradesh province of Southeast India with Prasad Gampala. Not long ago, Michael contacted CEM on behalf of his friends in India to request our cooperation in making the Youth Educational Adventures books (CEM's Sabbath School lessons for children ages three to 20) available for children at the House of God and in four other villages in the province. These books are used in Sabbath Schools and two additional times during the week. Mr. Gampala and his wife translated the books into Telugu dialect, and created PowerPoint presentations from the lessons as an aid to teachers. Mr. Gampala tells us that these lessons have been enthusiastically received.

Across the Arabian Sea in Africa,

Dimi Rock Wilfride with Mission Chretienne of the Republic of the Congo is working to preach the Gospel to French-speaking natives of that land. Mr. Wilfride contacted CEM to request help in getting Bibles to the people of the area—but he needed French translations, which we do not offer. We were able to find a volunteer right here in Whitehouse to translate transcripts of Ronald Dart's *Born to Win* programs into French for use by Mr. Wilfride. He should receive the first transcript this month.

CEM has also received inquiries from Russia, but, unfortunately, we don't know any Russian speakers!

The most recent inquiry was from a gentleman named Israel who also wanted to use the Youth Educational Adventures books for a children's school in India, near Sri Lanka. Israel is a long-time Sabbath and Holy Day keeper, and has a Sabbath-keeping ministry in India. CEM intends to make the YEA books available by download for his ministry, as well. He said his group will use the books in English, for the children there all want to learn English.

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prehensible power to sustain it will grant to me personally, the same knowledge and power if I do not make a valiant effort to overcome self and follow simple instructions?"

Outwardly, we may appear to others as good and decent people, but remember, this Creator, this God, who said he would roll the heavens back like a scroll, searches our hearts and the deep recesses of our minds and discerns intent and motive. Overcoming self is a life-long quest, but this is the essence of Christ's message. Do you realize pride and self are two faces of the same coin whose sole purpose is to destroy? Do you truly believe in your heart of hearts that the Bible is the inspired Word of this Creator?

Everything is as it has always been. Is it really? Is Christ delaying his coming or is God weeding his garden?

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*That the man of God may be proficient
and equipped for every good work.*

Short Takes

Uppermost in the minds of our readers and listeners is the question of how Ron Dart is doing—how he is progressing in his recovery. All of us look forward eagerly to the time when he can once again teach and preach with the depth and insight that we all enjoy so much. There is much that Ron can communicate right now, if we but take the time to listen. More and more, as he listens to his own broadcasts, watches the news, or attends a church service, he'll make a comment. We've decided to collect a few of his comments to share with you each month in this column.

"You know the thing that amazes me is for how far I've come and all that's happened, I am still very constant in my beliefs. They are unchanged. I'm there. It's me. I will carry on, for better or for worse" (Ronald L. Dart).