

DISTINGUISHING PROVISION FROM STEWARDSHIP

by Gary Carpenter

*This article is written specifically with the **Gospel Entrepreneur** in mind, although the principles apply to every "call" in the body of Christ.*

In December of 1997 I taught a series that was founded upon Luke 17:1-10 called "God's Steward Of Kingdom Finances." The pinnacle of that teaching was the revelation I have titled "Sonship vs. Sharecropper Faith." Briefly, the Holy Spirit showed me that Christianity is a "family," not a "religion," and that it operates very much like any "family business" on earth.

The Holy Spirit reminded me of my paternal grandfather's farm and how each of the sons and daughters had work to do every day as "their assignment," their "contribution" toward the common goal of "reaping a harvest." All of the children knew that the harvest belonged to grandfather. None of them had the mindset that the harvest, even a portion of it, belonged to them personally.

However, they also knew that when the dinner bell rang every night, they each got to sit and dine from grandfather's table not because they had "served him well that day," but rather because they were grandfather's children. Grandfather expected them to eat from his table until they were full. Their provision was not proportioned to them based on their "performance" that day on the farm. No, they were expected to take all they wanted from his table simply because they were his children.

Bringing this principle over into Kingdom Finances, the point we must understand is: As children of God our Father, our needs are met by His grace ... simply because of the finished work of Jesus Christ which opened the door for us to become adopted into the family of God. We can expect to be clothed, housed and fed simply because we are sons and heirs of God. This is the principle that Jesus was teaching in Matthew chapter six when He said:

Mat 6:25-26 Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

One thing is for sure: Birds of the air do not contribute toward the harvest of any farm. If anything, they diminish the harvest by eating from it while the crops are maturing. Yet the Father feeds them. Are we, being our heavenly Father's own children, to expect less from Him? No! We are God's children and we can expect to dine freely from His grace alone based on nothing but the finished work of Christ who made it possible for us to become the "spirit born" children of God.

Our mindset is to be that we never have to have a care regarding our own needs being met in order that we can devote our lives fully to serving our Father by going into the fields to reap a harvest of souls for Him. Said another way, we don't have to spend our lives preoccupied with earning money to supply our needs. Rather than spending our lives seeking after money, we can serve God our Father with complete peace of mind, confident that all of our needs are met freely by His grace. Of course, this was the main theme of Jesus' teaching in Matthew Chapter Six:

Mat 6:24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

A sharecropper's mindset is completely different. Knowing he is not a son, he would work a portion of grandfather's farm in the hope of reaping a harvest "for himself" from his labors. He knows he is not "family" and will not respond to the dinner bell to dine at grandfather's table. All of his labors in grandfather's fields would be with the underlying motive of getting his own needs met. Even though his portion of the crop may be a fixed percentage, his mindset is, "The more I sow, the more I will have." He will forever have the mindset of "performance vs. heirship," or "works vs. grace," and he will always have to eat from the fruit of his own labors.

That is a valid way to live, but it would be tragic for true "sons and heirs" to have such a mindset themselves. It would have been ludicrous for any of grandfather's sons to think that their portion at the dinner table each night was somehow restricted, based on how many acres they "sowed" that day. Unthinkable! They were sons! They were free to eat all they wanted from grandfather's table simply because they were sons.

After returning from Houston in December of 1997, I soon noticed that in my seasons of prayer, the Holy Spirit was no longer teaching me along the lines of Kingdom Finances. The concepts He began to reveal to me were all along the same lines that Pastor Dave Roberson calls "The Born Again Trail." After awhile I said, "Lord, why are you no longer teaching me about wealth transfer? You do understand, don't you, that Hollywood still has the money and your Church does not?"

The Lord's answer to me was, *"Supernatural wealth transfer is accomplished by inheritance only. I have taken you as far as I can down the path of Kingdom Finances until you better understand who you are and how to appropriate from your inheritance."*

I was given instructions to spend the vast majority of my time in 1998 in prayer and in making sure that I thoroughly understood everything Pastor Dave taught on "The Born Again Trail." In fact, the Lord allowed me to accept only three meetings away from the Prayer Center during all of 1998, even though I had many invitations to speak elsewhere.

After hundreds of hours of prayer and hundreds of hours meditating the lessons and scriptures that Pastor Dave has taught this year, the door has now opened into the next room of revelation knowledge concerning the supernatural transfer of wealth. It took a year, to the month, for my understanding to become transformed sufficiently to even enter this room. I freely admit that I feel that I have only now crossed the threshold into it. There is much yet to explore in this room.

For the past few weeks the Holy Spirit has been emphasizing these verses during my seasons of prayer:

Luke 17:7-9 But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not.

I cannot improve on the way Pastor Dave teaches this passage so I will simply quote him. *"A first class servant is the one who always puts the needs of his Master first. His life is spent on that one objective ... meeting the needs of his Master. A first class servant would never think of serving himself until after he was satisfied that he had done all he could to meet the needs of his Master each day."*

At the Prayer Center [and most likely in every Church] there are several people who obviously have the call to become Gospel Entrepreneurs. There is no need to mention them by name, but the "call" is obvious to everybody who meets them. All of them, including myself, are in various stages of development as our minds are being renewed to think according to the principles of the kingdom of God.

During this same time period while the Holy Spirit has been emphasizing "a first class servant meets the needs of his Master FIRST," He has also made sure I observed how myself and these people have functioned thus far during our training.

There is no need to mention names nor the methods of these people. It is the underlying patterns common to all of us that are important. One feels called to serve the Lord as a Gospel Entrepreneur by trading in the markets. Another by the avenue of creating and marketing new inventions. Another by starting and operating businesses. Another is in such early stages of development that he doesn't yet know what "method" the Lord intends for him to pursue ... but he knows he has the "call" just the same, and he is correct. At this point in his development and training as a Gospel Entrepreneur, his warfare has been mainly to simply "stay in prayer." Of course, that is the first level that all who truly "seek the Lord" must endure through.

All of these people are genuine and have the purest hearts of anybody I know regarding their desire to serve God ... not mammon.

As the Holy Spirit has been emphasizing the "first class servant" principle to me, He has also made me aware of the common pattern in all of the testimonies of these people, including myself, when we get together for fellowship. None of us, at this stage of development, have much to say in regard to the amounts of finances we have been able to give to meet our "Master's" need. The reason? We haven't had it to give! Certainly all of us have given as much as we could, but so far, these financial amounts have been relatively small. They have certainly not been the kind of massive transfers of wealth that all of us "see" in our spirit.

No, the common testimonies have not been about our "service," but rather about His "provision." All of us are amazed at how the Lord has miraculously provided for us even during this period of time when our thinking is so infantile as to be of virtually no service to the kingdom at all in regard to finances. The Holy Spirit then got even more specific, showing me how much more transformation of our minds is still to be accomplished.

He laid out the pattern in my own life first. When I finally obeyed the call to go full time into ministry, my heart was to serve Him fully for the rest of my life. As I would pray and receive instruction from Him, I would obey each instruction [sometimes very belatedly] one step at a time. I am speaking of such things as starting the bible studies, offering the cassette tapes for free, and so forth. But I have also known that at least a portion of my personal "call" is to transfer wealth from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God.

Those familiar with my testimony know that by obeying the Lord's instructions, I was cut off from virtually all conventional sources of income, both from the secular world and from what would be considered "normal" ministry income such as tape sales, appeal letters, and so forth. The end result was that even though I had a heart to serve Him and Him alone ... yet as a husband and father to my earthly family, my heart was consumed with thoughts of "how are we going to survive financially?"

Time precludes me from restating all of the precepts learned on that journey in this lesson, but suffice it to say, I was too consumed with how "my" needs were going to be met to be very much concerned about meeting the needs of my Master ... at least in the financial arena. Hardly the description of the "first class servant" Jesus described in Luke 17:7-9.

My desire has been for the Holy Spirit to teach me concerning the mysteries that cause the actual transfer of wealth from the world's system of mammon into the kingdom of God. On the contrary, He has thus far concentrated on teaching me the "Sonship," or "Heir" concepts of receiving freely from my Father's grace. As I am just now discovering ... the Holy Spirit had no other choice! That awareness is the key that unlocks the door into the next room of understanding.

What I said about myself could also be said of the others at the Prayer Center. For example, one man left his "day job" to go full time into trading in the markets. No man does such a thing unless he is sold out to serve God in the financial arena. But when I meet with him, to date, he has almost no testimony concerning

massive transfers of wealth into the kingdom. No, like me, his testimonies concern God's faithfulness to meet his needs even though his best efforts at trading in the markets have produced almost no harvest of finances for the kingdom.

Like me, the Holy Spirit has been teaching him first, both by precept and example, the knowledge of our Father's faithfulness to provide for His children even when our "performance" is virtually zero. Notice I said "performance," not "effort." This man, for example, has spent untold hours both in prayer and in learning the markets. But his "performance" based on actual wealth transfer is virtually zero. What was it Jesus said?

Mat 6:26 Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

I could give example after example of such men who are "called" to transfer wealth from the world system of mammon into the kingdom of God, but to date, are first having to learn that they are sons whose provision is not based on their performance. I do not mean for the reader to think that all of these men have had their daily needs met in a lavish way. On the contrary, it has been more of a "wilderness" experience of having "just barely enough."

It has been very much like receiving just enough "manna" every day to keep the electricity turned on, to keep food in the house for the family, to fill up the gas tank in their automobile just one more time, and so forth. It has not been a pleasant "learning experience" for any of them.

Just like the Israelites during their forty year journey in the wilderness, we would all prefer to have quail to eat and an abundance in our finances. But what was the lesson learned by Israel after forty years of such training? To a man, all of them would have to say, "God is our Provider!" They also learned that His provision was not based on their performance. After all, they did not conquer one square inch of the Promised Land during that time period.

They first had to learn that God was their Provider and that their provision was based on His grace ... not their performance. I believe the same lesson is being learned by all of these men who are "in training" to become Gospel Entrepreneurs. Paul said:

1 Tim 6:5-8 Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself. But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.

Praise God, It does not have to take forty years to acquire this attitude of heart, nor to live in this state of contentment. What is required to "enter into this rest?" The revelation that you are God's own child! He is your Provider because He is your Father. His provision is not based on your performance. He will always

provide for you based on the finished work of our Lord Jesus Christ when He paid the price for you to become a Spirit born child of God.

You will never become a "son" who is also a "first class servant" [financially] until you "enter into THAT rest." You will always be more concerned with your own needs being met than with the needs of your Master being met. "Fear of lack" will always dictate that the money which comes your way should be used to meet your own needs first, or should be stored for possible future needs, rather than to meet the financial needs of God's Kingdom. Said another way,

YOU ARE NOT FREE TO BECOME GOD'S SERVANT UNTIL YOU ARE "FULLY PERSUADED" YOU ARE HIS SON!

Why were my grandfather's sons so free of care regarding their own personal needs that they could freely devote all of their days to the "family business?" It was because they thoroughly understood that they were his sons! They knew the dinner bell would ring on time. They knew they would all dine from grandfather's table every night. There was no reason to think otherwise. They were his sons, heirs to all that was his. It was unthinkable to them that grandfather would forbid them from his table. It was their complete confidence in their father's daily provision that "freed" them to devote ALL of their energy to laboring in the fields.

Had they harbored doubts concerning grandfather's provision for them, then they would have had to devote a portion of their daily time to getting "their own" needs met. But being free of all such care, they could now devote all of their time and attention to bringing in the harvest. This "faith in our Father's provision" is precisely what Jesus was teaching in Matthew chapter six when he said:

Mat 6:31-34 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

The Church at large has been sadly lacking in such trusting confidence. The primary reason is because we have been steeped in religion rather than in our "sonship." We have not sufficiently understood that we are "sons first," and "servants second." In fact, it is even worse than that. For the first time I am seeing; we will never truly be free to be "first class servants" until we first understand thoroughly that we are truly "sons" and "heirs" of God.

We have been so "works" oriented that we have even taken Jesus' statement in Mat 6:33, "seek ye first the kingdom of God" to mean "work harder and harder at serving God" first, and THAT is what qualifies you to be blessed. No, No, a thousand times No! That method only makes you more and more of a sharecropper, basing your justification for being blessed on your own works. That is "sharecropper" mentality, not the mindset of "sons and heirs."

Five times in Matthew chapter six Jesus said, "Take no thought..." when it comes to the cares of this life. Why did He emphasize it so strongly? I say again, YOU ARE NOT QUALIFIED TO BECOME GOD'S SERVANT UNTIL YOU ARE FIRST "FULLY PERSUADED" THAT YOU ARE HIS SON! Until you are fully persuaded that your Father will faithfully supply all of your needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus ... based on NOTHING but the fact that you are His "son and heir," you will never be truly FREE to serve Him and Him alone in the financial arena.

When the Holy Spirit began emphasizing so strongly that a "first class servant" puts the needs of his Master FIRST, my feelings were hurt, and to be truthful, I was somewhat upset. One thing I have learned through these years of turning myself over to extended seasons of praying in the spirit is that I have absolutely no control over what the Holy Spirit chooses to teach me at the time. I felt like saying, "Well, if my stewardship is the main thing I needed to know to become a first class servant to the Lord, why didn't you teach me these things FIRST?" I said earlier that the Holy Spirit had no choice but to teach me first about receiving freely from my Father's grace. Only now, after these years of Him faithfully meeting my needs in spite of my pitiful performance am I coming to the place where I can disassociate the two things in my mind. I am learning to make the distinction between PROVISION and STEWARDSHIP!

My right to dine at my Father's table is free by grace, given to me based on the perfect and completed work of Jesus Christ. Faith in that finished work is sufficient to meet all of my needs for the rest of my natural life, and for all eternity as well. I dine at my Father's table because I am His son ... Period!

When it comes to my own personal needs being met: I am a son, a joint-heir with Jesus Christ. I will always and forever be free to dine from the table of my Father's grace based on nothing but the finished work of Christ when He suffered, died and rose again to open the door for me to be adopted into the "family of God."

Stewardship, however, is another matter entirely. Now that we have settled the issue that our daily provision is by grace based on sonship alone, let's take a look at stewardship. Again, the Holy Spirit has been teaching me along these lines using the analogy of my grandfather's farm.

As sons on my grandfather's farm grew in stature, wisdom and skill, their levels of stewardship increased over time. When they were very young, say five years old, their whole responsibility was to simply ride in the combine seat next to grandpa or one of the elder brothers. As they grew a little more, they were given very simple tasks at first. Perhaps their first assignment was to faithfully grease the wheels of the combine each day. Not technically difficult, but completely necessary if the combine was to remain in good working order.

Grandfather would watch them over a period of time to see if they were faithful in the daily stewardship of their particular assignment. If they proved themselves faithful over time, and as they grew in stature and wisdom, he would assign them

tasks requiring more responsibility. This is the never changing principle for true exaltation [regarding stewardship] in the kingdom of God:

Luke 16:10 He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.

Please keep paramount in your thinking that this is a "Stewardship" principle, not a "Grace" principle. After all, Jesus made this statement at the conclusion of the teaching we call "The Unjust STEWARD." Jesus Himself was teaching about how a man should "steward" his life in order to "serve" in the kingdom of God. The fact that Jesus was specifically teaching on how to steward money is evident in His next statement:

Luke 16:11 If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?

This is what God is looking for when it comes to equipping Gospel Entrepreneurs with the anointings of wisdom, knowledge and joy to fulfill their call. He is looking for stewards who will be "faithful in the handling of unrighteous mammon." Exaltation regarding your stewardship of finances IS based, 100 percent, on your performance. Unfaithfulness does not disqualify you from the dinner table of His grace. You are still His son. But unfaithfulness in the handling of money He has already entrusted to you WILL disqualify you for exaltation to new levels of financial stewardship in His kingdom.

If you prove yourself to be an "unjust steward," He will simply look for another son who WILL be faithful in the handling of kingdom finances. This is not rocket science. Jesus has brought His teaching down very low for us to be able to properly understand stewardship.

The principles revealed in the story of the "Unjust Steward" are not the subject of this lesson. We are endeavoring to expose a more subtle device of the enemy than that. If the reader is not familiar with the principles in that story, I have them written in other lessons and will be happy to send them to you if you would like to have them.

I think the best way to proceed from this point is to look at a quote from the testimony of one man who has the call to be a Gospel Entrepreneur. He states:

"The Lord laid the idea of Kingdom Finances upon me some 15 years ago. However, it was 4 years ago that He spoke to me and asked me to trust Him in a whole new area. He said He wanted someone He could use to take risks. It was a big step for me but I decided to take Him at His word."

"He then led me into commodity futures trading and some small cap stock speculation. I wish I could say that the project to this point was a raving success but on a physical level our success has been limited, I also wish I could say that I followed the Lord's instructions to the letter. Unfortunately I see now that I fell far short of following the detailed instructions I had at the time. Therefore I can't really blame God for my lack of success."

Failure to follow the precise instructions given by the Lord is a common thread that I have found in all of the testimonies I have received from such men. It is also what I have observed by watching those at the Tulsa Prayer Center who have the same call. There are many reasons for failing to follow precise instructions "precisely," but I want to zero in on the one that must be emphasized first. In a word ... CARE!

All of the potential Gospel Entrepreneurs that I personally know have been neutralized up to this point. You could say it this way: The devil has [so far] been successful at "devouring" their ministry of transferring wealth into the kingdom of God. What is it that allows the devil to successfully "devour" anyone, or at least the effectiveness of their ministry? Here is a verse that we are all familiar with, but is seldom taught in context:

1 Pet 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.

No matter whether we want to admit it or not, every potential Gospel Entrepreneur I personally know would have to say, "Up to this point, the devil has successfully devoured the effectiveness of my ministry." They have done everything they know to "resist the devil steadfast in the faith," as the following verse states, but still to no avail. Why not? We are still being destroyed for the lack of knowledge. (Hosea 4:6) The key to "resisting the devil steadfast in the faith" is contained in the previous verses:

1 Pet 5:6-7 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

When we have "care," we are devourable. It is no more complicated than that. In the man's testimony he said that God told him he wanted someone He could use to take risks. This is God's usual pattern, as seen throughout the old testament.

He sends Abraham and 318 household servants to war against the allied armies of Kings. He sends Gideon and three hundred men into battle against innumerable, trained, well-armed soldiers. The key to victory is always to learn to depend on the strength of God rather than upon ourselves.

The Gospel Entrepreneur is no less at war than Abraham, Joshua, Gideon, or King David. Unless they are successful in fulfilling their call, the devil and his people will always control the bulk of the earth's wealth. The question again arises, "How has the devil been so successful at devouring these men's ministry?" From 1st Peter, we see that it is by the taking of "care" that the devil "devours" us.

Again, five times in Matthew chapter six Jesus said "take no thought" concerning "care." He was teaching HOW to serve God and not mammon. The "risks" God asks the Gospel Entrepreneur to take can look frightening indeed! Unless the Gospel Entrepreneur is totally free from care, he will never be able to "precisely obey" the detailed instructions he receives from the Lord.

WE HAVE NOT YET LEARNED THAT OUR PROVISION IS COMPLETELY INDEPENDENT OF OUR STEWARDSHIP! PROVISION IS BASED ON GRACE! STEWARDSHIP IS BASED ON PERFORMANCE! THAT KNOWLEDGE FREES A PERSON COMPLETELY FROM ALL "CARE" REGARDING THEIR PERSONAL NEEDS BEING MET!

We have been destroyed for the lack of this "knowledge." This is one of the subtle deceptions the devil has used to "devour" the Gospel Entrepreneur. When the "risk" appears too great regarding our stewardship, we see that risk as threatening our provision. At that point, we compromise God's precise instructions with our own natural reasoning ... and what we compromise to keep ... we lose!

Again and again, the ministry of the **Gospel Entrepreneur** is "devoured" by the enemy because we have not sufficiently separated **STEWARDSHIP** from **PROVISION** in our minds. That is about to change!