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A Little Sermon  
on

M O T I V E S instead  
of ENTICEMENTS in  
Giving

“ The TITHE is the Lord’s ”  
“ It is HOLY unto the Lord ”

## Stewardship Series

"Moreover, it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful"

"Bring ye ALL the tithes into the storehouse"

# MOTIVES INSTEAD OF ENTICEMENTS IN GIVING



Lemuel C. Barnes, D. D.

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## **“How to Secure Larger and More General Contributions from our Churches.”**

Almost all benevolent enterprises are sick at heart for want of money. For that want the kingdom of heaven on the earth languishes. Of course there are no new nostrums to be advertised. But, we may well review some of the critical points in the case, together with the approved remedies.

What are some of the essential conditions of securing “larger and more general contributions from the churches”?

1. First, the churches need more thorough-going instruction on the financial phases of religion. They are instructed to surfeiting in many directions. In this direction their ideas are pinched because they have not been well fed. The bread of life here is abundant, but we haven't freely served it, or have crumbed it up into sweetened puddings and other fancy dishes. Jesus Christ taught plainly, over and over, as to the use of property. When it comes to those teachings of His we ministers are apt to mince the matter, and to allegorize and generalize and vaporize, until there is nothing seen but

mists and rainbows where God lodged thunderbolts. How often is the parable of the rich fool handled without gloves? or the parable of the wise steward? Men took such teaching originally much as some of them will now. "And the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things, and they scoffed at him." A pertinent question is, Are we willing to be scoffed at, as was the Master, or even met with a grieved look, for the same teaching? Besides Christ's many teachings which say in *terms* "mammon" and "money," many others have their primary application in that realm. Their secondary meanings rest on something more substantial than a mere figure of speech. The property relations used to illustrate a principle are a fundamental example of the principle taught. Thirteen of Christ's twenty-nine parables turn on a financial pivot. It is often more than a mere illustration, for property is pivotal in life. Christ spoke of a "talent." The word was simply a denomination of money, as we should say \$12,000, only in purchasing power it meant about ten times as much as \$12,000 would mean to us. Who authorized the world to take Christ's concrete word "talent" and turn it into an abstract noun, and then make a verbal adjective of it, and finally forget that a talented man is, first of all, a man who has the power of making money for his Lord?

If presented on all sides, the teaching of Christ and the apostles on money matters will not seem to the business man unsympathetic, but will rather bring dignity and spiritual glory to his vocation. The New Testament (to say nothing of the Old) is a but half-opened storehouse of needed instruction concerning the use of one's property, whatever the amount of that property may be, whether "five talents" or "two mites," \$600,000 or but two cents.

2. Along with deeper, more Scriptural instruction as to the purpose of money must go also wider and more accurate instruction as to the needs of the world. Generous men have often been fooled in their benevolent investments. They are sometimes dull and hesitating, because they feel their ignorance of where and how to invest most wisely. And the real ignorance and consequent lack of eager interest are far greater than the recognized. Men are lamentably uninstructed in social science—in the social science of beneficence. The prevention of blind, half-wasted, sometimes worse than wasted, beneficence, will give concentration and confidence, and so enlargement in contributing. To this end missionary concerts must be made up of something more than bits of isolated description and scrappy appeals. Systematic, studious, coherent attention must be given to the geography, the racial characteristics, and the religious

drifts of the whole world. City missions, State missions, and American missions must have their due consideration in the missionary concert, along with missions to the other hemisphere. All this instruction involves constant study, constant toil in teaching and learning. But without it greatly enlarged contributions are impossible. And it is the special phase of Christian thought calling for attention to-day as truly as "justification by faith" did in Luther's day.

The members of our churches have been thoroughly taught as to the way of being saved themselves, but scantily taught as to the ways of saving others. Three hundred Protestant years have inbred one-half of the gospel. The time has arrived to equally instil the other half. The churches have studied all phases of how to "come." It is now time to study all phases of how to "go."

3. A third condition of more general and generous contributions is that they be made on principle. There is no need to dwell on this. It is so important and comprehensive as to be often treated as the key to the whole problem. And so it is, making conscience the decisive factor instead of convenience.

4. A fourth condition of more general and generous contributions is that they be proportionate. The New Testament phrases are concise and exact: "According to that

a man hath," "As he may prosper." The Old Testament, with its coarse mechanisms, failed of equal precision. Footing up its fractions, it required of every man at least twenty per cent. of his income annually. But the criterion, "As he may prosper," requires of many men far more than twenty per cent., and of some possibly less than half that percentage. Seventy-five per cent. would not be unreasonable for many a man among us. It would not be as much as five per cent. from many another. Are these figures utopian, too high for the actual world? Not long ago a Baptist business man passed into the treasury on high, where he had been laying up fifty per cent. of his annual income. He was able to do that, but no better able than a hundred others who are not doing one fifth of that. A school-teacher, a woman who earns but \$500 a year, gives away \$250 a year. "As he may prosper" means more than most of us will admit till the day of judgment.

5. A fifth condition of more general and generous contributions is that the contributions be devotional — devotional rather than either mendicant or commercial, devotional in both method and motive. Christian contributions are acts of worship in their private origin and also in their public offering. They spring out of devotion to God — His work in the world — and should

be so regarded by the giver and so treated by the collector.

Sometimes the organization, missionary society or what-not, the mere mechanism of transfer, is presented as if it were the *object* of our devotion. People in our day are not enthusiastic about feeding any such fetish. It is difficult to keep from talking about supporting this and that society. And then it is difficult to keep some people from thinking, Why should I support this or that great society? In various ways there is danger of getting entangled in the machinery. Let us never announce a collection for the "State Convention" or the "Missionary Union," but always for State missions or foreign missions. All know that missions are sendings, and that God in Christ is the Sender. "As thou didst send me into the world, even so send I them into the world." Men are moved by the sendings of God, but will not stir for a corporation.

Devotional motives of contribution need to be sustained and stimulated by devotional methods of contribution. Contributions are too much treated as a necessary evil in church life, apologetically, deprecatingly, furtively. In public worship they are slipped in somewhere and covered up as much as possible. Singing and other devices are used to divert the mind from the painful and unseemly subject. Instead of

that everything ought to be done to concentrate the mind. The contribution is a central act of worship. All else outward is in word ; this is in deed. Much in religious meetings is directed toward men. This is directed toward God, and ranks alone with prayer. It is an offering to the Lord. Let us call it so, and no longer take up *collections*, but gather the *offerings*. The impersonal, indefinite word "collection" too easily covers coppers, and even buttons. "Offering" carries with it the twofold thought of something choice and something presented to God. It may be that the "contribution-box" and the "collection-hat" are worthy of the contempt into which they have fallen.

"Give unto Jehovah the glory due unto his name ;  
Bring an offering, and come into his courts."

Let portions of the Word of God which bear on the offering of property be read while the offering is made, or let there be singing which calls attention to the offering instead of away from it ; or if there is silence during the offering let it not be considered a recess from worship, but rather the culmination of worship. Beneficence, well-doing, is better than the best of well-speaking. When the offering has been devoutly gathered, then let it be dedicated

to God in a moment of prayer, either silent or vocal.

We shall have more general and generous offerings only when the deepest fountains are opened and kept open. Have we not been too much like people depending for water on catching drippings in jingling tin pails and sundry dishes, or at most in shallow cisterns sure to run dry in a dry time? The only perennial spring of beneficence is benevolence in its profoundest sense — not benevolence simply as well-willing toward man, but benevolence as well-willing toward God, willing God's good-will. Devoted offerings made in a devotional way will be growingly generous and general.

6. A sixth condition of larger and more general contributions from the churches is that contributions be sacrificial. By this is meant something more fundamental than "giving till you feel it." A man whose income is \$2,000, and who pays \$800 for house rent, cannot give \$10 without feeling it to the quick. The key to the situation lies further back than feeling; it is in the deliberate scheme of life. "A week of sacrifice" is a poor substitute for a life of sacrifice. A little Episcopalian miss in the circle of my acquaintance said: "Nobody tells what I give up during Lent." "Well, Caddie, what is it?" "Scalloped oysters, which I perfectly hate, and tea, which

mamma never lets me have." "A week of sacrifice" among Salvation Army people may mean something. But when a seal-skin cloaked lady, weary of thousand-dollar gayeties, gives up the opera one week for the sake of five dollars for missions, there is doubt if it goes down in the books of eternity under the head of "sacrifice."

But the trouble is deeper than superfluities. It is in the scale of so-called necessities. What is the common way of doing among Christians? We lay out our plan of living, or, more likely, drift into a plan of living which we like, or which we suppose is expected of us, and then try to pay our bills honestly, and give all that we can out of the margin of income which is left. Is not that a fair, kindly, appreciative statement of the fact concerning a majority of the best well-to-do members in our churches?

How many Baptist farmers lay their plans in the following order: "I must give so much this year for foreign missions and other benevolent work; that will leave me only about so much which I can spend in improving the breed of my cattle"? How many Baptist merchants put it to themselves in this way: "I must give so much this year to put struggling churches in my own state on their feet; taking out for this and many other lines of beneficence a quarter of my income, leaves me only so many hundred dollars which I can spend in

living and in increasing my capital"? Until our offerings come to have a first place, instead of a last place, in our plan of life, they will not be worthy offerings to God, but only the bones from which we have already devoured the meat.

It ought to be a Christian as well as a Hebrew proverb: "Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase." No man knows what sacrifice in giving is until he has rigidly, systematically scaled down his own expenses in order to leave more money for beneficence.

7. There is time to name only one more, a seventh condition, of more general and generous contributions. It is that they be made with gladness and singleness of heart, instead of with reluctance and duplicity. Many churches have fallen into the habit of dragging their contributions out of themselves with block and tackle. All sorts of pulleys are used. Imagine the Apostle Paul getting up a ten-days' fair in Corinth for the sake of the poor in Jerusalem! Such a supposition would be more than ridiculous, almost sacrilegious. Yet the object was what is commonly distinguished as charitable, rather than strictly religious. Think of the women in Philippi getting up a "donkey party" to raise the money which they sent twice in a month to support missionaries in Thessalonica. But the young

ladies' foreign mission band in a church which I know (not Baptist) did that not long ago, having, in addition to pinning the tail on the donkey and other equally noble numbers on the programme, "a pair of dressed geese," personated by two young men done to a turn in "pillows and sheets," the daily paper adding, "The affair reflected great credit upon the ladies of the mission band." It was another paper in which appeared the following advertisement: "Wanted — a thousand persons to eat oysters for the benefit of the —— Church." Recently a Senator "took a crazy-quilt around the Senate Chamber of the United States, asking for Senatorial autographs on the white patches, so that the First Presbyterian Church of St. Louis, Mich., could pay off its mortgage by putting the quilt up at a raffle." "Shades of Daniel Webster and Henry Clay!" exclaims the secular paper. "Weeping spirits of apostles and martyrs!" cries the thoughtful Christian. Let us say that these are extreme cases. But extremes of what? Of a common method of raising money for religious uses. I have the record of cases more extreme, which I should blush to read you, some of them in Massachusetts, some of them concerning Baptist churches.

But take the most conservative and harmless schemes ever used, what are they but devices with which to cajole out of our-

selves that which we are too close-pocketed to freely give? It bleeds our hearts to pay our dues unto the Lord, and so we salve the wound with artistic entertainments. We must have æsthetics as an anæsthetic during the painful process of parting with our money. It cuts us to the quick, unless we first benumb the sore spot with ice-cream. In that way, too, we get a little money from outsiders — little, indeed, just enough to ease their consciences and close our mouths.

There is one positive good to be said of these undertakings. They often furnish an occasion for united work, around which good-fellowship is promoted. But, on the other hand, good-fellowship is sometimes marred by them. Strength is often overtasked and nerves are worn to rasping. Again, the whole perplexing problem of doubtful amusements for young Christians has its deepest complication in the fact that the churches themselves have fostered amusements. Wholesome amusements are needful,— and so are railroads, but it is not the function of the church to provide one or the other of these. Besides, churches have not undertaken amusements mainly for the sake of the wholesome mental and social diversion, but mainly for the sake of extracting money from the unwilling, and so have been tempted to go as far as they possibly could in the hopeless com-

petition with ungodly amusements. In short, all circuitous methods of raising money for God miss the mark. Instead of promoting liberality, they burn it up. By consuming in a public blaze a vast amount of benevolent attention, they satisfy the conscience, with the smallest possible margin of actual beneficence. Roundabout methods are unscriptural, degrading, and, most in point, sterilizing. They bring labored, but scanty crops, and exhaust the soil without feeding it. These devices hold the same relation to real religion that praying-machines do. They belong in Thibet. They mean the withered end of piety. Growing generosity can be only when men bring their offerings of lips and hands straight into the loving presence of God. The cultivation of Christian simplicity, honest directness in financial relations with our Master, is one essential of larger and more general contributions; "not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing the Lord."

Brethren, is not a better state of things than the present not only desirable but possible? No one phase of teaching will achieve it. But the foregoing seven lines of teaching blended into one continuous stream of earnest inculcation will bring *something* to pass. Christian hearts will respond to purely Christian motives. A church in a far Western State, suddenly be-

reft of its financial mainstay, gathered itself up, without any clap-trap stimulants, without any professional debt-raisers, without any sallies of wit, without any pathetic stories — gathered itself up, and in thirty days wiped a thirty thousand dollar debt clean out. It was done in the closet of secret prayer, the subscriptions were cash, and their separate sums known only to God. It is not surprising that the State in which that is the mother church leads the country in *pro rata* offerings for foreign missions through the Missionary Union.

I have observed that Christians in the East are made of the same stuff subject to like lordly motives. One of the churches in New England, long in the front rank for the size of its offerings for missionary objects, in which it gained sixty-five per cent. last year over the preceding year, has recently, by abolishing pew-rents and appealing to exclusively religious motives for current expenses, increased its income for that object also by about fifty per cent. These cases can be duplicated by the hundred all the way from Maine to California. Wherever people rise into the higher sphere of motive there is unexpected achievement. Everywhere the people of God are ready to hand over their money, if only they can become aware that it goes into the hands that were pierced.

## Two Churches

THERE was a church in our town  
Which thought 'twas wondrous  
wise.

It tried to pay expenses  
By selling cakes and pies;  
But after years of trying  
That plan to raise the cash,  
The folks got tired of buying  
And the whole thing went to  
smash.

There was a church in our town,  
And it was wondrous wise;  
It always paid expenses  
By simply paying tithes.  
For when 'twas found the tithe did  
pay,  
It seemed so very plain,  
Forthwith 'twould have no other  
way,  
Not ever once again.