



God's Plan for Prosperity

A traditional custom practiced by many Native people is the Potlatch. The Potlatch is a ceremonial feast in which friends and fellow tribal people are invited to celebrate a wedding, the birth of a child, or an occasion where someone is honored. To this day our Native brothers and sisters in many Northwest coastal areas practice the Potlatch feast and ceremonies.

After the Potlatch feast, a celebration of traditional dances takes place with handmade masks and costumes depicting stories, events, or histories of their people.

Sometimes the custom is followed of passing out money to those who attend the celebration. Often monies are given away in the form of 100, 50, 20, or 10-dollar bills. Historically, extravagant gifts of clothing, beautifully carved household utensils, or hunting weapons were given to guests. One of the reasons for this custom is to practice the principle that when a man or family is blessed with wealth, it's their duty to help the unfortunate who may not have such blessings.



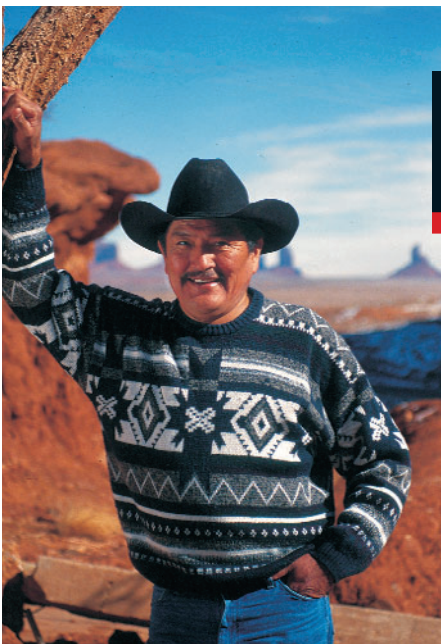
Many of our Native brothers and their families have discovered that we are blessed by God when we are generous toward others.

This ceremony teaches young people that it is their role to take care not only of family members but also of others in need. Although some who have given a Potlatch have fallen into the trap of pride in displaying their status of wealth, others have worked to preserve the purity of true caring for others through these gracious acts. This caring attitude is in line with the great spiritual teaching, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). Many of our Native brothers and their families have discovered that we are blessed by God when we are generous toward others.

Key Thought. Our God is interested in all of the affairs of our life. He is not only interested in our eternal salvation, but He is also interested in taking care of our daily needs. God does not always in this life automatically repay funds given to the poor and to the church. But we will receive, to varying degrees, blessings in this life beyond what we give. (Compare Mark 10:29–30 and 2 Corinthians 6:10.) Ultimately in our heavenly home He will more than repay the generosity of those who give to others who are in need. However, God wishes to bless us financially today. In this lesson there are seven principles that God has given to help us prosper.

BIBLE ANSWERS

1. Is it God's plan to help us prosper? 3 John 2. (Circle one) (1) Yes. (2) Just some people. (3) Sometimes. (All quotations from the Bible in these lessons are taken from the New King James Version (NKJV) unless otherwise noted.)



Just having a lot of money doesn't necessarily mean that a person is prosperous.



When we look at prosperity, we must look at the whole picture of what brings us happiness and peace.



Note. We notice in this verse that God is not only referring to prospering financially, but He also refers to our health and all other affairs of our life. When we truly give our lives to Jesus, it affects everything we do. When we look at the principle of prosperity, we must look at the whole picture of what brings us happiness and peace. Just having a lot of money doesn't necessarily mean that a person is prosperous. It is God's plan that we have at least enough to take care of our financial needs. God, however, blesses some with more financial strength than others.

As you read God's plan concerning money, there is one principle that continually stands out: God entrusts wealth to those He knows will not become selfish because of it. We must understand this principle if we want God's blessings financially. The more you think about it, the more sense this makes.

2. What promise does God give to those who wish to be generously blessed? Malachi 3:10. "Bring all the _____ into the storehouse, . . . and try Me now in this, . . . if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it."

Note. Like our Native Potlatch, in Bible times it was the custom on feast days, at weddings, and other celebrations for rich people to open the windows of their homes and throw out silver and gold coins to those below. In the same way the Bible writer declares that God will also open His windows to us. The Bible says that the blessing He bestows will be so bountiful that

our pockets will not be large enough to hold it. God says He will “pour out” blessings on us, meaning He will supply all our needs, if we will just align ourselves with Him. Part of aligning ourselves with Jesus is giving back to Him a tithe of our earnings.

Tithing teaches the great principle of supporting the spreading of the gospel.



“Tithe” means one-tenth of the income that God gives us. He wants us to return the tithe to Him to support the work of the ministry. Tithing teaches the great principle that when we support God’s work of reaching out to everyone around us with the good news of God’s plan of salvation, God will bless us so we can do more.

Tithe is holy unto the Lord (Leviticus 27:30). In the Old Testament the tithe was given for the support of the priests and the sacred services (Numbers 18:21). The same principle is found in the teachings of the New Testament where God purposed that the work of the ministry and spreading the gospel should be supported by the gifts of tithe and offerings from God’s people (1 Corinthians 9:11-14).

Those who are faithful in giving ten percent of their income will be greatly blessed. They will receive much more in return than they ever give to the Lord's work. Malachi 3:11 says, " 'And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, so that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field,' says the Lord of hosts." Here God promises to bless the activities in which we are involved.

We may not have all the things we
"want," but our "needs" will always
be provided for.

Christians are always amazed to see how those who tithe faithfully for the support of the ministry are financially blessed. It isn't a matter of how much money a person has. If an individual is faithful, God will take care of his/her needs. Many say the only reason people tithe is because they can afford to do so. That is not the case. When we return a faithful tithe, no matter what our income or how tight our budget, God will make our money go further and give us enough to get by. We may not have all the things we "want," but our "needs" will always be provided (Psalm 37:25; Philippians 4:19).

3. What practice allows God to bless those who have money with even more? 1 Timothy 6:17-19. (Compare Isaiah 58:10, 11.) Circle one: (1) Generosity. (2) Helping those in need. (3) Sharing. (4) All of these.

Note. The reason God is able to bless those who are generous with the means He gives them is because He



knows their hearts won't be lifted up or be so proud they can't be led by Him anymore. God doesn't want riches to destroy us. He asks, "What have you gained if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul?" (See Matthew 16:26.) If we are able to handle money with a generous heart, there will be no room for selfishness to close us off from God.

It is amazing to see how those who have money and are generous are blessed more and more as they continue to give to those who are less fortunate and to the forwarding of the gospel. The promise is that the generous soul will be made rich (Proverbs 11:25). In addition to our tithe we should give offerings to the Lord. In Bible times the worshiper was instructed to bring an offering to the temple (Psalm 96:8). So it is God's desire for us today to bring offerings with us when we come to worship.

When we recognize that everything we love comes from the Creator, it changes our attitudes toward giving.



4. What attitude does God wish us to have when it comes to giving? 2 Corinthians 9:7; 8:12; Ephesians 4:28; Proverbs 6:6-11. Circle one: (1) Willingness. (2) Cheerfulness. (3) Both of these.

Note. The Bible tells us that we are to give with a willing heart. We are told not to give grudgingly or of necessity, because God can only bless cheerful givers. How we give reveals how completely we are surrendering our hearts to Christ. When we daily recognize the fact that everything we have comes from the Creator, we will want to give as He has asked us to. God will help us understand that we are just caretakers of all He has entrusted to us. Giving is not to be a burden but a delight.

5. What other principle does God want us to exercise in the handling of money? Proverbs 6:6-11; Luke 14:28-30. Circle one: (1) Plan ahead. (2) Take care of our responsibilities. (3) Work with diligence. (4) All of these.

Note. We don't have to be money wizards in order to handle our money with wisdom. The point is that God wants us to be careful with what He gives us. We show appreciation for God's blessings by making them go as far as we can. Another big reason for planning is that God is able to bless us more if we don't just live for "immediate" wants. We should avoid trying to keep up with our neighbors or giving in to playthings or fast fixes to satisfy our immediate selfish wishes and desires.

Planning ahead with our means and money is a char-



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We don't have to be money wizards to handle our money with wisdom.

acter trait that helps keep our life from becoming selfish and foolish. God is able to bless people who practice planning in their lives (Psalm 37:21).

A Christian knows that it is important to be faithful in making our payments when we borrow money (Exodus 22:14). Being faithful in our promises is part of a God-like character. We are to be trustworthy in the agreements we make, just as we can trust God in the promises He makes to us.

God blesses us when we make an effort to work hard. A true follower of Christ will not be a lazy person. When honesty is in our heart, we will make an effort to take care of our responsibilities. The Bible teaches that if a

man doesn't provide for his family, he is showing that Christ is not leading him. In fact, the Bible says that such a person is worse than an infidel (1 Timothy 5:8).

God can only bless us when there is the true element of honesty in all our efforts. The Bible says that if we seek to gain money through any other way but hard work or careful management, it is the same as stealing (Ephesians 4:28). The reason for this comparison is that God can only bless those with honest characters. Honest work is a sign of an honest character.


6. Will God heartily bless those who multiply their talents and money? Matthew 25:14-29. *Circle one:* (1) Yes. (2) No.

We are to make use of what we have been given. God wants to multiply the money we have gained through our work and honest dealings. Then the more we use these God-given monies to do good, the more God can bless us.

Those who selfishly hoard their money become narrow and selfish. Happiness, peace, and enjoyment of daily living is difficult for them to attain.

Planning ahead with our means is a character trait that benefits our lives.

7. What attitude should we have as Christians when it comes to financial affairs in our lives? Matthew 6:25-34. “Therefore, I say to you, do not _____.”



God blesses our hard work and effort.
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Note. As Christians we need not be overly concerned about material things. God has promised to supply our every need when we put our trust in Him.

God longs to bless His people. Those who are honest will regard all of God's commandments as a blessing and a guideline in their lifestyle and purposes. When we are committed to God He blesses us abundantly. Those who honor God as their Creator are those who also remember where their strength comes from to get wealth.

Commandment keepers are the kind of people who will be generous to others because God has been generous to them. God can entrust them with riches because He knows they will use them to bless His work on earth.

Closing Thought. Yes, God desires to bless and prosper us. God wishes to prosper you or anyone who chooses a personal relationship with Him.

Here is a summary of the principles that God gives to guide us in the handling of our finances:

- (1) God promises to take care of our needs, not always our wants.
- (2) He asks us to return an honest tithe of what we earn and to be generous in our freewill offerings.
- (3) He wants us to be generous to those in need and to the work of God.
- (4) He encourages us to make an honest effort to work.

- (5) He wants us to plan ahead and be honest in the handling of our finances.
- (6) The more we try to make the money we have work for God and His purposes, the more God will bless us.
- (7) Our finances will be blessed when we honestly endeavor to keep all of God's commandments.

All these principles of God's desire to bless us are summarized in one passage in the Bible. "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:31-33).

Next Lesson. We will continue to study the Bible's teaching about lifestyle and God's way to true happiness. We will also discuss lifestyle practices such as gambling that will not only destroy us financially but will also destroy our character.

Christians should be the kind of people who will be generous to others because God has been generous to them.





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