

Overflow Blessings

by Dr. Art Brown

I dream of a day when the church in North America has been transformed into a truly global church. Believers have begun to share generously across national and ethnic boundaries. Many have begun to invest their treasures in the things of eternity; therefore, that is where their hearts have begun to dwell.

No longer do the hungry of the world wait for individuals to respond to a special appeal. Overflow giving from believers in wealthy nations provides not just emergency aid, but — far more important — the venture capital for God-honoring employment to be available to people whenever they follow Him.

Local churches around the world have become centers of community health. People are coming to know Jesus daily. Medical and dental facilities, nutritional and community health information, moral and ethical teaching are available and modeled in local Christian communities. Every cultural context has been proven as good soil for holistic gospel penetration.

Perhaps best of all, even the rich nations of the world have begun to experience spiritual renewal, a direct result of hearing Jesus say, “Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me” (Luke 18:22). Many have given so much away that initially they thought they would have nothing left. Yet they have proven again that our Lord will be no one’s debtor. As they have taken seriously the tithe, the Lord has opened the windows of heaven and poured out a blessing so great they could not hold it. As they have given generously beyond what was required

or reasonable, the Lord has proven His word true,

“Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap” (Luke 6:38). But most importantly, many Western Christians who had made security and comfort their god have returned to life in the Spirit.

For some people, my dream is already a reality. A few weeks ago I spent a Sunday afternoon telephoning several friends who I knew had discovered the joy of overflow giving. Each gives liberally to many opportunities in the church. The more they have given, the more the Lord has entrusted to their use. Let me share some of their experiences.

Two friends from Florida tell of life-changing experiences early in their marriage. “Our new pastor was on his honeymoon — less than two weeks on the job. How could we say no to him?” they recount. “Yes, our church building did need a new roof. And the front steps were deteriorated. Yet, he nearly insisted that we begin to give 10 percent to missions. We really couldn’t afford to do it, but how could we turn him down? ‘If we do it, the Lord will provide,’ he insisted. Sure enough, by fall all the building projects were completed and the church finances had improved. A few months later, he had another challenge: every family should give an amount equal to their weekly salary for the annual missions offering. Again, how could we turn him down? And we’ve learned the Lord blesses those who give.”

A couple from New York was also challenged in the early years of their life together. “We never step out on faith without the Lord blessing us,” they witness. “Early in our marriage the Lord challenged us to move our giving from the 10 percent tithe to double that. Each year we would increase our giving by an additional percent. The Lord continues to bless us. Giving is an expression of our gratitude. The Lord gives us everything that we have. The Lord blesses us, and we want to bless others.”

Michigan friends had a similar experience. Personal relationships with FM missionaries made them realize what it means to really give your life to the Lord. One of them shared, “It made our giving seem so very small, and made me realize that I was never giving to a missions program, I was giving to people.”

How can such experiences become the norm in the church? How can we release for

global Kingdom advance the trillions of dollars that Jesus has given the church in the West? It will take a radical response from everyone. Why not try one or more of these Secret Strategies to Invest Your Treasures in Eternity? I would love to hear how God uses such a radical tactic to bless your life.

Secret Strategies to Invest Your Treasures in Eternity:

- 10) Discover some practical way that you can express today the biblical truth that every blessing is given so that the blessed can bless others.
- 9) Make an appointment to speak to your pastor — or some other spiritual leader — about what it would mean for you to begin tithing.
- 8) Consider giving — as an act of commitment and faith — an additional amount equal to one week’s salary to support a missionary or help a new missionary get more quickly to the field.
- 7) Many Christians are in bondage to credit card debt. Either begin to pay off your credit card balance fully every month or cut up those cards immediately.
- 6) Choose to sponsor at least one child in the International Child Care program for each of your children or grandchildren.
- 5) Ask the Lord to show you one area of your life where you can radically change your lifestyle, making it possible for you to give significantly more to plant churches among the unreached of our world. (For example, you might limit yourself to one Starbucks latte a week rather than one a day.)
- 4) Choose to live on last year’s income — take your cost-of-living increase and underwrite the work of Jesus in a country of the world through Free Methodist World Missions.
- 3) Begin to tithe today. Go cold turkey. Test and see if the Lord will keep His promise of Malachi 3:10.
- 2) Make next year’s vacation a trip with purpose. Contact the VISA Ministries office and ask where you might serve for two weeks and make an eternal difference for Jesus.
- 1) Become part of a covenant group whose purpose is to live out the principles of Christ’s promise, “Where your heart is there your treasure will be also.” ■