



One Vision, One Heart

A quarterly letter for financial contributors to Spirit & Truth Fellowship International.

VOLUME 6, ISSUE 2

MAY 2004

Dear Spirit and Truth Fellowship Stakeholder,

May our GREAT BIG WONDERFUL GOD pour out His blessings upon you and yours today, and may He be magnified unto you so that your faith in Him increases proportionately, thus allowing Him to do for you all that He wants to do. Wouldn't *that* be awesome?

It is a joy to open our hearts to you once again in this issue of *One Vision, One Heart*. We greatly appreciate you and your stand with us via your financial support of our work, and we do feel like fellow laborers with you in the ministry. You are precious to us, and that would not change if we had millions of contributors rather than the approximately 600 who now give to Spirit & Truth. Actually, it is your faithfulness that is making it possible for us to broaden our base of supporters.

As you know if you have been a part of Spirit & Truth for a while, we very rarely make a strong "pitch" for financial assistance like many other ministries do. We have often made known our needs, but apparently not often enough, in light of the fact that some people have gently chided us for not letting them know when we had a need. In this letter, we want to make known to you our present financial situation and encourage you to consider increasing your giving to Spirit & Truth. As you will see herein, God's provision is evident and our basic needs are being met. Nevertheless, there are many more things we want to do, and the only thing stopping us is a lack of resources.

A study of Scripture and of Church history makes it clear that what we are doing is on the cutting edge of God's work in the world today. That is not to say that we are better than any other Christians or that we are the only ones on the cutting edge, but simply to point out that, for whatever reasons, what we are making available to people is unique. We do not say that with glee, but with sadness, because surely God's heart must hurt to see His precious people too often "destroyed for a lack of knowledge," knowledge that by His grace and mercy we could share with them if they had access to our work.

For example, the indispensably vital truth of The Secret, with all its practical relevance to healthy and fruitful Christian living, was buried shortly after the death of the Apostle Paul in about 70 AD and virtually unheard of until the 1800s when John Darby began to bring it to light. Although this magnificent truth is still a secret to most believers today, it is central to our teaching. Our next major writing project is a book on the administrations in Scripture, which we pretty much have in our hearts, and long to produce when we get the time to write it.

As you know, we are right smack in the middle of a spiritual war. Obviously, the Enemy of God hates the truth of His Word that we are making known and is doing all he can to stop us. He doesn't need a Harvard Economics Degree to know that one of the most effective ways to stop us is to keep money from coming to us. The less money, the fewer employees and less work produced, the fewer the translations of our work into other languages, the more restricted the outreach and the fruit, and the more people he keeps in darkness and bondage. Ditto for the opposites of those things.

If you have been around us for a while, we would guess you realize that, by the grace and mercy of God, not only do we have great truth from His Word, but also we can present it in an understandable and winning way. That is evidenced by the testimonies from those who have heard our teachings and read our books. Again, Satan sees the same thing and is "hell bent" (Yes!) on limiting people's exposure to us and our materials, because he knows that if they hear the Word we teach, *many of them will believe it*—just like we all did.

At present, no one in Spirit & Truth can travel as extensively as we would like for a number of people to do, but God is using our three websites to reach many people around the world. Yes, we would love to be able to hire others to do the administrative work that Mark, John S., and John L. are now required to do so they can be freed up to teach and write. But we want to see many other people also out and about proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ and the integrity of our Father's Word. Who knows when the Lord will come for the Church? It may be centuries, and we want to "make hay" while the Son shines.

As do you in your family economics, we live day by day with the tension of desiring to walk through the many doors opening for us in the ministry, and the limitations of the resources necessary to do so. We know that God longs for our faith to meet His provision, so of late we have made a concentrated effort in our self talk to MAGNIFY God, that is, to make Him look bigger to us so that our trust in Him grows. Hebrews 13:5 and 6 sum it up (fill in the blanks relative to your own needs): "Because God has said..., so we boldly say..." Amen.

HOW BIG IS OUR GOD? Big enough to instantly festoon the farthest reaches of space with His stellar witness. Big enough to create a man and woman from the dust. Big enough to part the Red Sea. Big enough to preserve three men in a fiery furnace and bring them out without even the smell of smoke! Big enough to infuse new life in the beaten body of His dead Son. And big enough to fill your spiritually dead body with His holy spirit, guaranteeing you everlasting life. As Romans 8:32 says, "He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?"

Ephesians 3:20 also helps us magnify our heavenly Father's infinite desire and ability to care for us, saying that He is "able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine"! Despite the fluctuations of the economy or our personal circumstances, our magnificent Father is there for us with all we need, and no doubt He wants to do more for us than we allow Him to do. Jeremiah 17:7 and 8 say that the man who trusts in God will be like a tree planted by the water who "has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit." That kind of faith is available, and it is what we need in order to see this ministry bear the fruit God wants us to bear.

Because we (that includes you) have been faithful to hold to the truth of His Word and share it with others, as well as do our best to keep our hearts right before Him, we believe that God's blessing is upon this ministry. He almost always works through people (with an occasional raven helping out—1 Kings 17:6), and we need more people who want to be a part of that blessing to the end that they give as the Macedonians gave: "Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For...they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability" (2 Cor. 8:2 and 3). Surely the results will be the same: "And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all you need, you will abound in every good work" (2 Cor. 9:8). We are deeply committed to abounding in those good works, and we are trusting God for His grace to abound in all of our lives to make them possible.

As of this writing, we are in great need of a financial windfall to replenish our undesignated savings, as well as a significant increase in the regular contributions we receive. That does not take into account the many projects, itineraries, etc., that we will do as we have the resources. The enclosed "Wish List" identifies some of the projects that are a priority for us.

At present, our Partners provide only about 50% of our basic operating budget, with the rest coming from other contributors, some regular and some not, as they are moved to give. We realize that it is God who ultimately provides, but as you know, He inspires people to be His intermediaries. We thank you for commensurately sharing with us to whatever degree you appreciate and have been touched by our work.

We cannot tell you how much we appreciate your desire to support this ministry. Many of our contributors have told us that they would love to give much more than they feel they can right now. We are touched by that, and we pray that their desire comes to pass. There are few greater joys in life than giving to a cause that you believe in. We pray much for all our contributors, large and small, that the blessings of God rest on every aspect of their lives. It is a great privilege for us to stand with you for our God and our Lord Jesus.

In his service,

Mark, John S., Tom, Gary & Karen

The Board of Directors

p.s. Most all charitable organizations encourage their supporters to include them in their will or to use other financial tools such as a living trust to contribute to their work. To the best of our recollection, we have not mentioned that to date, but we know that it makes sense and is a practical means for you to bless this ministry if you are so inclined. You can name the beneficiary as either Spirit and Truth Fellowship International or Christian Educational Services.

Revenue	Jan-Mar 2004
Partner Giving	89,527.44
Non-partner Giving	48,695.33
Restricted Gifts – Recognized against expenses	9,849.15
Restricted Gifts – Missions	5,154.00
Other Gifts	1,000.00
Total Gift Revenue	154,225.92
Expenses	
Salaries & Wages	70,847.55
Administrative Expenses	83,869.26
Foreign Missions Expenses	16,544.90
Program Expenses	11,376.15
Special Projects Exp. (supported by restricted gifts)	1,728.75
Total Operating & Program Expenses	184,366.61
Bookstore Net Proceeds	2,702.13
Camps & Conferences Net Proceeds	3,986.02

NEWS ABOUT OUR RECENT AUDIT

In keeping with our commitment to follow the laws of our nation, Spirit & Truth/CES asked our accounting firm, Gauthier & Kimmerling to do an audit on our 2003 financial records. It cost us about \$9000, but we wanted an outside opinion in order to ensure our compliance with IRS regulations, and also to assure our donors that we are handling their contributions honestly. In their report, G & K stated:

"An audit includes examining, on a test basis, evidence supporting the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. An audit also includes assessing the accounting principles used and significant estimates made by CES' management, as well as evaluating the overall financial statement presentation. We believe that our audit provides a reasonable basis for our opinion.

In our opinion, the financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Christian Educational Services, Inc. as of December 31, 2003, and the changes in its net assets and cash flows for the year then ended in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America."

G & K listed a few procedures that help to ensure greater accountability within the office in the processing of receipts and disbursements. Some of these we were already doing, and the others we are implementing.

Spirit & Truth Fellowship International

“Wish” List

(May 2004 Figures approximate)

Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work (2 Cor. 9:7 and 8).

Camp Vision

\$250,000 to purchase

Personnel

Receptionist/secretary	\$25,000/yr
Administrative assistant	\$35,000/yr

2005 Missionary trips

(Money to come from gifts over and above regular giving)

Africa & India (Togo, Congo, Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania & Kenya)	\$30,000
Philippines	\$12,000

Missionary general

Additional minister support	Unlimited
Printing of translated books	Unlimited

Good News Class

\$13,000 still needed

Editing and post-production costs

Publishing

Reprints of:

<i>Don't Blame God!, Is There Death After Life?</i>	
<i>The Gift of Holy Spirit, The Christian's Hope</i>	\$15,000
CES Catalog	\$2,500
General CES Brochure	\$1,500

Technology

Server to bring websites in house	\$3,500
Increased bandwidth to support website traffic	\$3,000/yr
Website advertising	\$2,000/mo

If you are not a Partner with us (or a regular contributor), please prayerfully consider supporting us in this way. We honestly believe that Spirit & Truth is an excellent investment that will bring dividends to those who stand with us financially.



Together We Can!

Tithing vs. Giving

Date: Wednesday, December 31 @ US Eastern Standard Time

Topic: Money

The question must be: “What does the Bible say TO CHRISTIANS about financial giving?” Why? Because what God says to Christians about financial giving is different than what He said to the Jews of the Old Testament about it. The sad news is that today very few Christians understand the difference, and, as a result, many are unnecessarily living under emotional and financial stress.

Tithing vs. Giving

FAQ: Most churches I have been to teach rather emphatically that Christians should “tithes,” that is, give 10% of their income to their church. I have even heard some ministers say that if you don’t tithe, God will not bless you. What does the Bible say about financial giving?

“What does the Bible say?” is always the “bottom line” in life, but that vital question needs a qualifier: “To whom?” The Bible, the Word of God, most certainly does speak about financial giving, and a good case can be made that it is one of the five most basic activities for a Christian, the others being prayer, Bible reading and study, fellowship with other Christians, and telling others the Good News about Jesus Christ.

The question must be: “What does the Bible say TO CHRISTIANS about financial giving?” Why? Because what God says to *Christians* about financial giving is different than what He said to the *Jews* of the Old Testament about it. The sad news is that today very few Christians understand the difference, and, as a result, many are unnecessarily living under emotional and financial stress. For a more detailed exposition of this subject than we can set forth in this FAQ, I recommend our 90 minute tape titled [The Joy of Giving](#), as well as a book we carry titled [The Tithing Dilemma](#), by Ernest L. Martin.

And, as is so often the case in examining a biblical issue, that takes us to the subject of *the administrations in Scripture*. Unless we understand what parts of God’s Word are written to Jews, what parts are written to Gentiles, and what parts are written to Christians, we can neither understand nor apply its truths in our daily lives. [What parts of the Bible are written to you?](#)

We are currently living in what the Bible calls the Administration of the Secret (Eph. 3:9), which began on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1ff) and will conclude with the Rapture of the Church (all living and dead Christians meeting the Lord in the air—1 Thess. 4:13-18). The primary curriculum for Christians (i.e., people born again of

God's incorruptible seed) is found in the Church Epistles: Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and 1 & 2 Thessalonians. It is there that we must look to find God's specific directions for us today, and the issue of financial giving is given two chapters worth of ink in 2 Corinthians 8 & 9.

There are also some pertinent verses in other Epistles, and the message of Scripture to Christians is that because of the finished work of Jesus Christ, we do not live under the Mosaic Law, during which tithing was instituted and commanded as part of the Law. Therefore, *tithing as a commandment of God has no relevance to believers today.*

At this point, it is important to distinguish between tithing and giving. Although *tithing* per se is not relevant to Christians, *giving* most certainly is. As a member in particular of the Body of Christ, **each Christian is to determine in his own heart how much he gives and where he allocates his resources** among his brothers and sisters in Christ (2 Cor. 9:7). The Epistles metaphor by which material giving is strongly encouraged is that of sowing and reaping—the more you sow, the more you reap (2 Cor. 9:6). “Tithing” is never mentioned.

We are working on a booklet on this subject, and it may be titled, *In Response to a Blessing*, because that is the biblical basis for giving. Under the Law, Jews were to give out of their produce, that is, what the Lord had provided for them. Just like the Word says, “We love God because He first loved us,” so *we give because God has given to us*. When we understand what God has done for us in Christ, and that the material blessings we have come from Him, and that He promises to bless us back for what we give, giving cheerfully is a joy.

Even in the Old Testament, believers understood that when they gave to God, they were opening a door, if you will, for Him to bless them in return. This is, of course, still true, but the idea has been distorted by some Christians who teach that one must give to God before God can bless him. Thus, too many Christians are *giving in order to get*. No, God always gives first.

Also, He does not specify just how He will bless us. If we sow, we will reap accordingly, but it may not be money for money, etc. Some Christians have become disillusioned about giving because when they gave money to their church, etc., they did not receive money back. They may have even failed to notice the blessing that God *did* give them. When we give in response to a blessing, and not so that we will get blessed, we can be cheerful and contented givers.

Making known the truth about this subject is critical, because the vast majority of Christians is told, and thus believes, that it is God's will for them to “tithe,” which means to give one-tenth of what they earn. Many of the more “fundamental” Christian groups are adamant about this, and accompany this exhortation with a warning that failure to tithe will result in consequences of various kinds, usually having to do with a lack of prosperity.

In many groups, this has become little more than ecclesiastical extortion, with church leaders using the lever of people's sincere desire to do what God says is right to squeeze money out of them. Such leaders proclaim that what God says is right is that you give at least ten percent of your income—to their organization. As a result of such pressure, financial giving has, for too many Christians, become a joyless, mechanical act of “bribing” God to avoid the consequences of not giving, and an attempt to earn His favor (something they already have!).

For many other Christians who once gave cheerfully, financial giving is no longer an act at all. They have stopped doing it altogether, either because they got sick and tired of the pressure being applied to them, or they really could not afford to tithe, or they saw the money they gave misused and feel that they were cheated when they did give.

Neither of these attitudes—giving joylessly or not giving at all—is biblically right, neither is the will of God, and both are therefore detrimental to a believer. That fits with John 8:32, where Jesus said that experientially knowing the truth, that is, practicing it, will make one free. Conversely, error regarding the Bible (the truth) will put people in bondage. And financial giving is a category in which countless Christian people are being subjected to the bondage of guilt and put through an emotional wringer they do not deserve.

If you feel that the above describes you, take heart, because you can be set free by the truth of God's Word. Then you can also share with others the treasure you have found. In our economically driven world of today, having the right attitude about money and material things is a huge asset in life. Knowing and practicing what God's Word says about financial giving will enable you to experience *the joy of giving*, and it will enable others in the Body of Christ to experience the joy of receiving and therefore having their needs met, so that together we can reach out with the Good News of God to a dying world.

A study of the Old Testament will show that tithing was instituted as part of the Mosaic Law to Israel. Some Christians point to Genesis 14 and/or 28 in a misguided attempt to prove that tithing was instituted prior to the Mosaic Law and is therefore relevant to Christians today. Their rationale is that because Abram gave ten per cent of the spoils of war to Melchisedek, and because Jacob chose ten per cent as the amount to give to God for watching over him on his journey, this is the prescribed amount God would have all people give. This is not sound biblical scholarship.

The Genesis 14 record takes place approximately 2000 years after Adam and Eve, and during all those years there is no biblical reference to tithing. Nor is there any record that Abram ever tithed as a result of some biblical law that told him to do so, and he certainly was “making money!” When he did give one tenth, it was not of the increase of his flocks and herds, which was the tithe prescribed by the Law, but rather of the spoils of war that he had gained by defeating the army from Mesopotamia.

In Genesis 28, Jacob told God that *if* He would keep him safe on his journey, keep him clothed and fed, and bring him home safely, he would give God a tenth of what he had. That was certainly not the Mosaic tithe, which was commanded whether or not those things happened. Both Jacob and Abram gave in response to a blessing.

Even in regard to Israel, for whom the tithe was specifically instituted, nothing was said about it until the beginning of the second year of their exodus. Prior to that, in Exodus 25, for the building of the Tabernacle, Moses instructed the Israelites to give “as their heart prompted them.”

You often hear proponents of the tithe say that surely Christians would do no less than what Jews did in the Old Testament, as if every Israelite gave ten per cent of his income. A detailed study of the tithe is beyond the scope of this FAQ, but suffice it to say that the idea that each Israelite gave ten per cent of his income (and therefore each Christian should do likewise) is far from the truth.

For example, an Israelite who had fewer than ten cattle born to him in a year did not have to tithe on them because the requirement stated that only the tenth animal that passed under the rod was to be tithed (Lev. 27:32). A farmer who had only eight cows born was therefore exempt from the tithe.

The tithe was basically on animal and agricultural products, and was paid in kind (i.e., the product itself). If one did not wish to pay his tithe in agricultural products, and decided to give money as a substitute, he was penalized and had to add a fifth part of its estimated value to the amount he paid (Lev. 27:31). Such a law was obviously not intended to encourage payment of the tithe in money.

The main purpose of the tithe was to support the Levitical priesthood. The Levites were responsible to minister to the people, and were prohibited from owning land, which obviously limited the ways in which they could earn income. God’s plan was that their support came from those to whom they ministered, much like the direction of Scripture for the Church today (1 Cor. 9:1ff; Gal. 6:6ff, etc.). The tithe also provided welfare for widows, orphans, etc.

One reason why there was no command to tithe until the Mosaic Law was that until then there was no Tabernacle (Tent of Meeting) and no Temple, no regular sacrifices commanded (the daily sacrifices alone commanded by the Law required more than 700 animals a year), and no class of Levitical priests to support. None of these would be relevant to a Christian today, even if they did exist.

Should a Christian today tithe? One is free to give 10% if he chooses, but we are not commanded to give any particular percentage or amount. Sad to say that many Christians, once misled and often emotionally coerced into tithing, stopped giving altogether when they learned the tithe is not required. 2 Corinthians 9:6 and 7 make it clear that the more generously we “sow” with the right attitude, the more abundantly we will reap.

For some believers who do not earn much, giving generously may not mean a large amount. For others, it may mean millions of dollars, and far more than 10%. Each Christian's situation is different, and that is why God does not prescribe specific amounts that we should give, but allows us to make our own decisions. Remember, we are "fellow laborers" with Him, and He loves to work with us in determining how much and to whom we should give, and He loves to bless us with more so that we can give more. That kind of giving makes for an exciting element of the Christian life.

You may say, "Well, what about Malachi 3:6-10? That says people who do not tithe are 'robbing God.'" Those verses have been used innumerable times to prod Christians into giving, but wait a moment—TO WHOM is Malachi written? Well, in verse 9 of chapter 3 it says "the whole nation" is under a curse. What nation? The USA? No, the book of Malachi is specifically addressed to the nation of *Israel*, and more specifically to the priests (see 1:6,10-13; 2:1,7 and 8) who were badly mistreating God's people. To use verses from Malachi as if they are talking to Christians is at best poor scholarship and at worst dishonest.

So what *should* Christians do about financial giving? 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 is the first place to go to find the answer to that question, and the heart of the message there is expressed in 9:7: "Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." If, for you, that's ten per cent, great.

Beyond that, Scripture directs us to give to those who are genuinely ministering to our spiritual needs. When we do, we are making a sound investment in (that is, sowing into) a work that is bearing good spiritual fruit. Although there is no way we can help everyone who asks us, we are also encouraged to give to those in need, and we can seek the Lord for wisdom in doing so.

For a Christian, giving from the heart is all about knowing that we have a great, big, wonderful God, and also understanding who we are *in Christ*. Speaking of the attitude of the believers in Corinth about financial giving, Paul said: "This they did, not as we hoped, but even beyond that, first they gave their own selves to the Lord, and to us, by the will of God" (2 Cor. 8:5). As Christians, each of us has been "bought with a price." *We* (let alone our material possessions) don't even belong to ourselves. When you know that you belong to the Lord, and that everything that you have belongs to the Lord, and that he is responsible to keep his promises to care for you, then you can truly be a cheerful giver.

[For further study on the subject of Money, Click Here!](#)

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