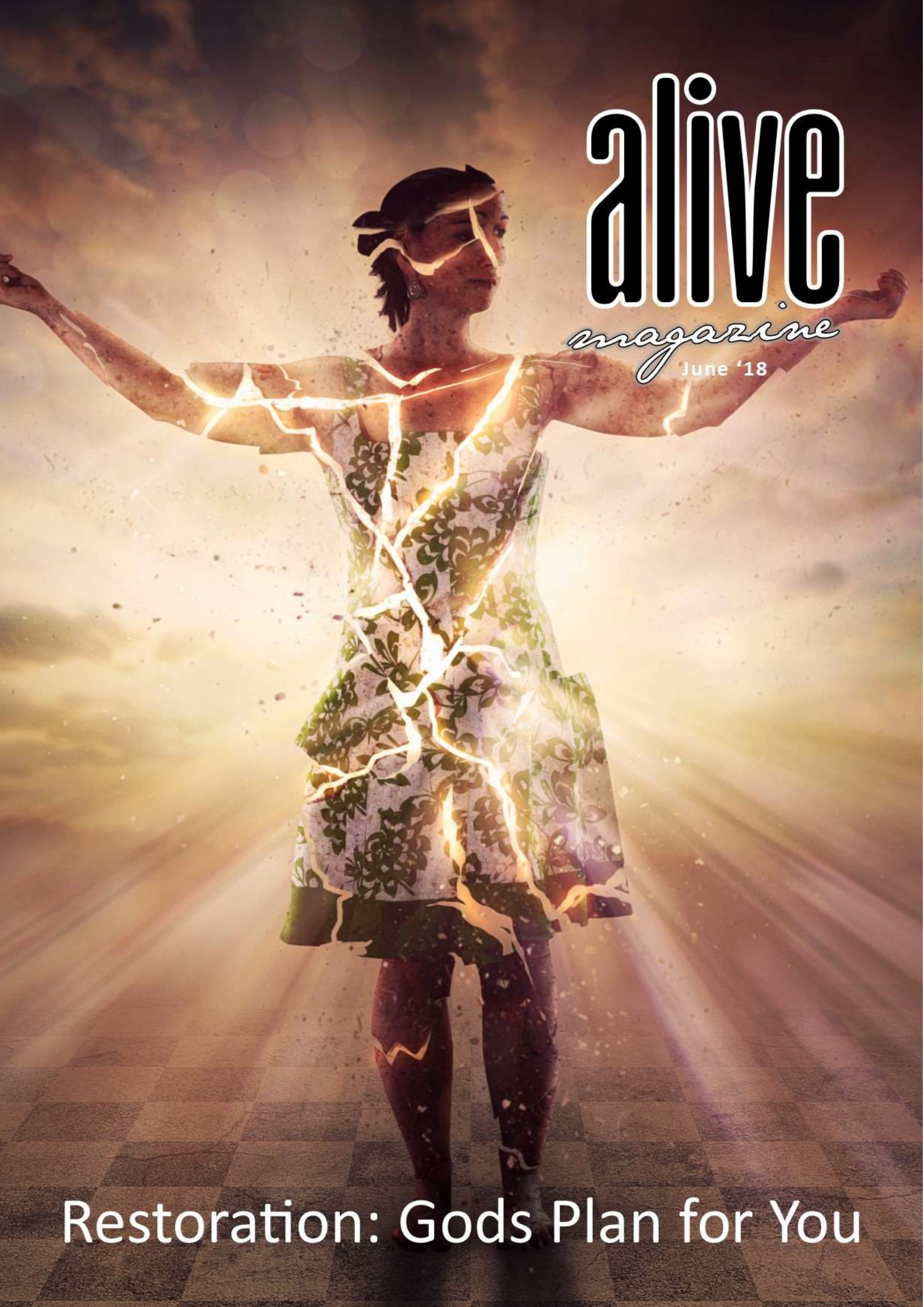

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WHAT SHOULD CHRISTIAN PARENTS DO IF THEY HAVE A PRODIGAL CHILD?

Gotquestions.org

There is inherent in the story of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32) several principles that believing parents can use to react to and deal with children who walk contrary to the way in which the parents have raised them. Parents need to remember that once their children have reached adulthood, they are no longer under the authority of their parents.

In the story of the prodigal son, the younger son takes his inheritance and goes into a far country and wastes it. In the case of a child who is not a born-again believer, this is just doing what comes naturally. In the case of a child who at one time made a clear profession of faith in Christ, we call this child a "prodigal." The meaning of this word is "a person who has spent his resources wastefully," a good description of a child who leaves home and wastes the spiritual inheritance that his parents have invested in him. All the years of nurture, teaching, love, and care are forgotten as this child rebels against God. For all rebellion is against God first, and is manifested in a rebellion against parents and their authority.

Notice that the father in the parable does not stop his child from leaving. Nor does he follow after his child to try to protect him. Rather, this parent faithfully stays at home and prays, and when that child "comes to his senses" and turns around and heads back, the parent is waiting and watching and runs to greet that child even when he is a "long way off."

When our sons and daughters go off on their own—assuming they are of legal age to do so—and make choices that we know will bring hard consequences, parents must let go and allow them to leave. The parent does not follow after, and the parent does not interfere with the consequences that will come. Rather, the parent stays at home, keeps faithfully praying and watching for the signs of repentance and a change of direction. Until that comes, parents keep to their own counsel, do not support the rebellion, and do not interfere

> *"If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler"*
> *(1 Peter 4:15)*

Once children are of an age of legal adulthood, they are subject only to the authority of God and the delegated authority of government (Romans 13:1-7). As parents, we can support our prodigals with love and prayer and be ready to come alongside once they have made their move toward God. God often uses self-inflicted misery to bring us to wisdom, and it is up to each individual to respond correctly. As parents, we cannot save our children—only God can do that. Until that time comes, we must watch, pray, and leave the matter in the hands of God. This may be a painful process, but when carried out



biblically, it will bring peace of mind and heart. We cannot judge our children, only

God can. In this there is a great comfort: "Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

> ***Far be it from you to do such a thing—to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Genesis 18:25b).***









When You Don't See Results From Tithing

By Bob Lotich from SeedTime.com

For all the encouraging tithing testimonies that I hear from readers, I occasionally get people emailing or commenting something like this:

- "Tithing didn't work for me"
- "I tithed for a while, but didn't see results"
- "I quit tithing because I didn't notice any change"

I have wanted to write this article for a while addressing this, but I have been hesitant because there aren't any one-size-fits-all answers. And if there are, I definitely don't know what they are. I have some thoughts and maybe some humble suggestions for you to take to the Lord and ask for clarity, but no solid answer. I also want to say that this article is written with much prayer, humility, and love backing it. I believe as you read this, the Lord will lead you to your answer even if there is not even a hint of it in the article below. But I did my best to address some of the common reasons why some people don't see results tithing and a few other thoughts as well that I will share below.

My Tithing Challenge

I tend to be a pretty all-or-nothing type of guy, so when I first got a hold of Malachi 3:10 I dove right in and went for it.

> *"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse … Test me in this, and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it."*

Actually giving the 10% wasn't as challenging for me as patiently waiting for the second half of that promise to be fulfilled. You see Linda and I have always had a dream in our hearts to be greatly used by God to give lots of money to fund the Kingdom of God. When we were dating, we would talk and dream of what it would be like to be able to buy cars for people in need, to simply write a check and feed thousands of starving kids, and use our money to support evangelistic work all over the world. But the reality was that we were so financially strapped that it was difficult to find money to buy a gift for a friend's birthday party.

After we got married, we joined forces and decided to pay off all our credit card debt, and then things got even tighter. We decided to NOT stop tithing while we were paying off our debt. And then we felt like God was leading us to actually give more during that phase.

At first I was arguing with God a bit. "Come on, we barely have 2 nickels to rub together, should we really give more?" What I didn't realize at the time was that He wasn't trying to take money from me, but He was trying to help us get the debt paid off faster.

> *"Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously." 2 Corinthians 9:6.*

Just like any farmer knows, the more seed you sow, the bigger your harvest will be. In hindsight it is easy to see that's what He was doing, but at the time I had no idea why He was calling us to give more while trying to pay off our mountain of debt.

Meanwhile At Work…

I was beginning to realize that I had entered a low-paying career-path that had very little room for growth. I had always been a hard worker and even though I hated my job I continued to work hard but always felt like a mediocre performer because it wasn't suited for my gifting's. And then our company got bought and our entire department got notice that we were no longer needed. If it hadn't been so discouraging, it would have been laughable.

Starting A Side-Business

During this time I had started a home-based business (my blog) as a way to make a little extra money. And like many new businesses, I didn't see results right away. In my first 6 months I made a total of $110. The earnings were increasing each month, but when I was officially laid off we were barely making $100/month from the blog. And then I felt God leading me to NOT look for another job, but to work on the blog full-time. I thought "Um God, you are joking right?" I had spent a year working on the blog to only be earning $100/m – how in the world is this ever going to be able to support my family?

And Then My Faith Got Tested Again…

Within weeks of getting laid off, I got a job offer paying 2x as much as my previous job doing work I would have loved. I thought, "This is God's breakthrough!! Finally, we are seeing some progress!" As soon as I was about to accept the position, I could just sense God telling me that I was not supposed to take the job. I wrestled with this for days. After all the financial and career struggle we had been through, it almost seemed like a cruel trick to dangle that out in front of me. And it was. But it wasn't God playing the trick. The devil was tempting me at a critical crossroads in my life. In Luke 4 Jesus was tempted by the devil, and he was trying to knock Jesus off the path of His calling by tempting him with lesser things. In the moment I didn't realize that taking that job would have derailed God's plans for my life, but years later, it is clear as day that it would have. It was so difficult to pass that job up, but I did and continued to do what God had asked, to work on the blog full-time.

Where Was My Breakthrough?

During all those years, we faithfully tithed and even looked for opportunities to give more whenever possible. I struggled every day wondering where my breakthrough was. I wondered if I was doing something wrong or if I had missed God's direction at some point. But, looking back, the truth is I think I was right where I was supposed to be. God knew where I was and He wasn't going to let me be forgotten.

Breakthrough Came In Unexpected Packages

Part of my problem was that I was looking for the breakthrough to come via my job. I was more or less assuming that the ONLY way God could provide was through a raise at work or a promotion. Additionally, I assumed that Phil 4:19 would mean that He would provide money. But that's not what the verse says.

> *"And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus." Phil 4:19*

It says he would provide for our needs, and there are many other ways to do that OTHER than money. In our case, even during the times when it looked like we weren't seeing results tithing, He was providing AND in increasing measure. These are just a few of the ways I can recall:

- Reducing Expenses. During those years I learned many great ways to save money that freed up many hundreds of dollars each month. I could have gotten a raise at work that might have yielded an extra $100/m which would have been great, but instead we reduced expenses by probably $500-$700 month by making some simple changes. The bottom line is that we had hundreds more in our pocket each month. I call that God's provision.
- Unexpected Sources Of Income. We did have some unexpected sources of income during that time. Two big ones I can recall was the severance package that I got from my employer as well as the retention bonus for agreeing to work until the last day.
- Getting Debts Paid Off. We then used most of those funds from my employer to pay off many of our debts. This just reduced our monthly expenses even further.
- Gifts. I can't even begin to list all the gifts and items that people gave to us during those years. From wedding gifts, to couches, to tables, to lamps, everywhere we looked we saw God's provision. At one point we looked around our apartment and almost everything had been given to us.

Then Some of the Bigger Harvest Began

As awesome as all that provision was, over the next few years we really began to see the fruit of all that tithing and giving. By nothing other than the miracle working power of God, my blog began earning more than my old job in less than a year. And over the next couple years, the business earnings and other provision just continued to grow until we felt like we were experiencing Luke 6:38: "Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap…" It was a little overwhelming at first. I had never been in a position where I had more than enough. We decided to basically cap our standard of living and just keep sowing (giving) the rest. This eventually led us to start giving our age as a percentage of our income. And all these years later God has continued to provide all our needs. I love this quote by RG LeTourneau: "I shovel (money) out and God shovels it back, but God has a bigger shovel."

A Few Questions To Ask

If tithing doesn't seem to be working for you, here are a few questions to honestly ask yourself. Like I said at the beginning, I don't have your answer, and there isn't one answer to this question. But my prayer is that as you ask yourself some of these questions and ask God to show you, you will get some revelation for your specific situation.

Are You Viewing Tithing As A Turn-Key System Instead Of An Act Of Faith?

The act of Tithing is NOT a turn-key system or a money-machine where you simply put in a dollar and it spits out a dollar. God (rightfully so) refuses to be reduced to a simple formula like this. But, it is more of a general truth that requires faith in GOD and a trusting that what He says, He will do. Matthew 6:33 (NASB) states that we should, "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." It should be no surprise that God wants our hearts, and for us to simply "give to get" and view God as a divine ATM, is missing the mark. If we truly understand how much we have been given we will find ourselves desiring to "Honour the LORD with your wealth and with the best part of everything you produce." Pro 3:9 (NLT).While having a trusted advisor proof this article, he left this comment and I thought it was just too good to leave out… "…In our minds, the tithe/blessing graph normally has an x axis (give) and y axis (receive) and we see the relationship as cause and effect. But, I think there's a third access that we could call "heart" that is indicative of what God is doing IN us during the journey. The heart axis adds a third dimension whose fruits are mysteriously intangible but so beautiful as God carries us across spiritual milestones in the path of our lives. When we get hung up on why tithing isn't working, we've probably missed the question of why we tithe in the first place. We're not called to be obedient SO that we experience tangible blessing; we're called to be obedient so that we experience heart-peace, and tangible blessing is icing on the cake. The beauty of the blessing that follows obedience is that heart-peace is achievable regardless of circumstance when we loosen our grip on our own perceived control of our lives and our expectation of what God's timeline should be in those specific circumstances."

Is It Possible That God Has Provided In Ways That You Weren't Expecting?

Like in our story above, provision doesn't necessarily mean money. In my case a whole lot of God's provision in the first few years of tithing wasn't money, but Him providing for my needs nonetheless.

Are You Actually Giving The Amount You Think You Are?

Just like with budgeting, if you don't track it you don't really know what is happening. And I don't want to get too hung up on exact percentages, but I know in my own tithing experience when I found out that I wasn't actually tithing when I thought I was – we decided to get exact with it. And as soon as we did, we realized we didn't have enough to cover our monthly expenses. But guess what, God came through for us. It was almost like he was looking for the opportunity to be tested.

Are You Expecting Results Too Quickly?

In the example above, we did see almost instantaneous results from making that change. But, over the years most of our breakthrough took a while. Think about it, when you plant a seed, you don't get to eat the fruit the next day – right? It takes time for that seed to sprout, the seedling to grow into a plant, and then for fruit to develop and ripen before you can eat it. Sowing into God's Kingdom is no different. It takes time before we can reap the harvest.

And the length of time seems to be different for every tither you ask. I wish I knew why, but the bottom line is that these seeds we sow into His

Kingdom will bear fruit, we just need to hang on to Galatians 6:9: “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.”

Have You Actually Received Financial Increase And Not Noticed?

I don’t know about you, but before I began using a budget to control my spending I would get raises from work and never really feel any financial impact. I would just go about spending like normal and spend until the bank account ran out of money. When you live like that you very well might not even notice the provision of the Lord. Without using a budget it is very difficult to feel a financial increase of 5% or even 10%. And for some people even a 50% increase could go unnoticed.

Are You Giving Cheerfully Or Out Of Compulsion?

You should not be giving because you feel pressured to. This is an opportunity that we have to trust God and watch Him move in our lives. 2 Corinthians 9:7 says: “Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” If you are struggling with that cheerfulness with giving, ask God to help you with it – He will!



Are You Obeying Him As He Is Leading You? God could be leading you to do something that would provide those blessings and provision. And if you don’t obey, you might be missing out! Read this passage from 1 Kings 17 (during a famine). Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah: 3 “Leave here, turn eastward and hide in the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan. 4 You will drink from the brook, and I have directed the ravens to supply you with food there.” 5 So he did what the Lord had told him. He went to the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan, and stayed there. 6 The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook.

What if Elijah hadn’t obeyed God?

When God called me to step out in faith and work on the blog full-time, it didn’t make any sense. In the natural it looked like it would take years to even get back to what I was earning at my day job, but by His miraculous grace within a year the business was providing far more than my old day job. If I hadn’t obeyed him in that area I would have missed out on those blessings. It may just be that your blessing and provision is on the other side of obedience.

Final Thoughts

If you find yourself not seeing the results you expected from tithing, I would encourage you to pray and ask God to reveal to you why. Walking something out in faith and not seeing results has been one of the toughest aspects of the Christian life for me. I have been there so many times and I will say this: because I have seen this pattern play out over and over with God, it is getting a little easier to step out in faith.
But it still is hard.





Leaving Your Spouse Because of Abuse

MarriageMissions.com



The following article comes from the book, Beloved Unbeliever, which is written to women with spouses who are unbelievers. However, the principles outlined in this article apply to every spouse who wants to leave because of abuse. Please prayerfully read and consider what the author Jo Berry has to say, about leaving your spouse because of abuse. Jo Berry begins this portion of the book by citing the scriptures in 1 Corinthians 7:15. She explains that letting the spouse "leave" goes beyond physically leaving the marriage. As you read the article you'll better understand the scripture: But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace. (1 Corinthians 7:15)

God Understands

Rather than demanding that an unequally yoked wife stay in a situation where she is abusively oppressed, our Lord gives her an option. He does this because,

"Just as a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him. For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are but dust" (Psalm 103:13-14).

He understands her humanity and takes pity on her. A Christian woman who is facing emotional or physical abuse needs to understand both the terminology and the implications in this verse. She can then act on it within the dictates of her own common sense and conscience. The word "leave," as it is used in 1 Corinthians 7:15, means to depart or let go. While this most obviously refers to a physical separation, the concept of letting go embodies more than physical absence.

Thought Precedes Action

Since thought always precedes action, I believe we can assume that abuse and cruelty are outward manifestations reflecting a mental state of abandonment of the essence of the marriage. So, although Paul is dealing with physical separation, certainly there can also be a psychological severing, an emotional letting go, that is just as devastating and real as a mate's actual departure. Scripture does not deal specifically with this problem of abuse, but Christ's attitude and certain biblical statements can help us draw conclusions about how to respond to it. The Gospels are saturated with statements about and examples of Jesus' compassion. He was especially tender toward women and children. Think of how gently He approached the woman at the well, how respectful He was to the woman caught in adultery. Consider also how He met Mary's needs by teaching her as she sat at His feet. And then think of how, during excruciating agony on the cross, He committed His mother to the care of His friend, John.

Christ's Example

In the fifth chapter of Ephesians, the apostle Paul commanded husbands to "love [their] wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her" (Ephesians 5:25) and to "love their own wives as their own bodies"(Ephesians 5:28). Christ, in love, sacrificed His life for the church. This example is the antithesis of abuse. It appears, then, that any man that constantly mistreats and maligns his wife, who wounds her psychologically and/or physically, has "let go" and departed from the intent of his marriage vows. He may be living under the same roof and sleeping in the same bed with her, but if he neglects her needs and destroys her as a person by attacking her body, soul, or spirit, mentally he has left! If he is cold, cruel, and uncaring, he has already separated himself from her, even if he shares a house with her. In his sick mind, the relationship is over.

Act of Leaving Spouse

The idea of leaving, then, can legitimately include the unbelieving husband mentally and/or emotionally abandoning his wife. The final act of "leaving" may mean he will physically remove himself, but the psychological process leading up to that moment may manifest itself in ongoing abusive conduct. The Bible says that when this happens a Christian wife is to let him leave. The Lord does not expect or want her to suffer mental or bodily harm at the hands of a husband who is supposed to sacrificially love her. God does not want her to be oppressed or incapacitated by fear. Quite the contrary, "the sister is not under bondage in such cases" (1 Corinthians 7:15), and any woman who is physically harmed or verbally belittled, insulted, or harassed by her husband is under bondage. Any wife whose husband controls her mind and activities with threats or brutality is enslaving her.



"God is not a God of confusion but of peace"
(1 Corinthians 14:33)

Freedom in Christ

In this same chapter, Paul reminds us, "You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men" (1 Corinthians 7:23). God did not buy an unequally yoked wife out of the slave market of sin so she could be under bondage to another human being. He purchased her with the blood of Christ and freed her so she could voluntarily become His bond-servant. She has to draw the line if her husband consistently oppresses her, by whatever means. In Luke 14:26, Jesus said, "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate[the comparison of her love for Me, her] own father and mother and[husband] and children and brothers and sisters, yes, even [her] own life,[she] cannot be my disciple." She has the right and responsibility to choose freedom impossible for her to fulfill her Christian calling.

Submission is Voluntary

We have already seen that submission is voluntarily choosing to yield or surrender to someone. When God instructs wives to subject themselves to their husbands, He is asking them to surrender to their husbands' love and God-given position. Nowhere does Scripture imply that the Lord expects a wife to accede to verbal castigation or physical assault. Many times women who are in this position convince themselves that they would be unsubmissive if they fled. So, instead of retreating and protecting themselves and their children (who may be scarred for life from exposure to continual abuse), they become passive; but passivity is not the same as submission. Whereas submission is voluntary, passivity is forced oppression. Whereas submission allows for individual dignity, passivity breeds self-hatred, and eventually a wife who subjects herself to abuse starts believing that she deserves it!

Why Victims Stay

She convinces herself there is no way out and that she is only getting what she has coming to her. This is especially pronounced in cases where Christian women knowingly married unbelievers. Frequently they stay to punish themselves, to pay the penalty for their sin. Their attitude is: I got myself into this, now I'm stuck with it. So, they become passive. It is vitally important that a woman who suffers maltreatment in her marriage draw the distinction between submission and passivity.

Also, some women stay because of guilt. They believe that their faith in Christ is the reason for their husband's abusiveness, so they think that staying is a cross they must bear —part of their suffering for Christ. They need to realize that there is an immense difference between being persecuted for the Lord and for righteousness' sake, and being physically or emotionally abused by a man who is a tyrant. Although, an unbelieving husband might use his wife's faith as an excuse for attacking her, that is not the real reason. Men who batter or consistently demean their wives are emotionally ill. The emotionally yoked wife who is being vilified by her husband does not have to submit to his tirades. God does not ask her to yield to outrageous attacks.

False Assumptions

Sometimes a Christian woman who is being harmed by her mate stays with him. She believes the Lord will protect her no matter what her husband does. Candy thought that, until Glen shot her. Eleanor thought that, until Ed fractured her back and skull when he threw her down the stairs. Emily thought that, until Howard burned down their house. He was spaced out on pot and booze and fell asleep on the sofa with a lighted cigarette in his band. Their three-month-old daughter suffered severe burns over 30% of her body and was in the hospital for months. Claudia thought that, until she had a mental breakdown. Her children had to be put in foster homes while she recovered. That happened because the court ruled that her husband was not a fit father.

Like Begets Like

If there are children involved, the repercussions of living under such disparaging conditions can leave them with lifelong scars. Scripture teaches the importance of example. We are warned not to associate with fools, liars, fornicators, idolaters, blasphemers, or hot-tempered people. If we do we may end up imitating their behaviour. Statistics show that many parents who are child abusers, and many batterers were themselves mistreated as children. Many abusers came from homes where one or both parents were abusive. Like begets like. Removing herself and her children from danger isn't selfish, isn't sinful, isn't unsubmissive — it's smart. God hasn't called the wife to live in a spirit of fear and instability but of "power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7). He hasn't chosen her to live in a state of confusion, not knowing what to say or do next, or what tirades her well-intentioned responses might bring. "God is not a God of confusion but of peace" (1 Corinthians 14:33) and "has called [her] peace" (1 Corinthians 7:15).

Domestic Violence Safety Plan Guidelines

We realize that there are various reasons why spouses stay in abusive relationships. And even though Marriage Missions doesn't condone abuse in any way, we can't tell you what to do. But we want to give you some safety plan guidelines. We believe they could help you to better protect yourself, whether you leave or not. Abuse is cowardly, controlling, and wrong. And even though you don't feel like you can take advantage of the help that is available here (although we wish you would) there are still some ways in which you can protect yourself.

Guidelines for Safety

Below are some guidelines for safety. Glean through them, and use whatever will help you to protect yourself if you are being abused: One of the most important things you can do when developing your safety plan is to talk to a victim advocate or social worker who can help you fully consider safety issues. They can also help you understand your legal rights, and identify community resources (e.g., shelters, sources of financial assistance, or food banks).
The following safety suggestions have been compiled from safety plans distributed by state domestic violence coalitions from around the country. Following these suggestions is not a guarantee of safety. But they could help improve your safety situation.

• Identify your partner's use and level of force. This is so that you can assess danger to you and your children before it occurs.
• Try to avoid an abusive situation by leaving.
• Identify safe areas of the house where there are no weapons and where there are always ways to escape. If arguments occur, try to move to those areas.
• Don't run to where the children are as your partner may hurt them as well.
• If violence is unavoidable, make yourself a small target. Dive into a corner and curl up into a ball with your face protected. Position your arms around either side of your head, with your fingers entwined.
• If possible, have a phone accessible at all times and know the numbers to call for help. Know where the nearest pay phone is located. Know your local battered women's shelter phone number. Don't be afraid to call the police.
• Let trusted friends and neighbours know of your situation. Develop a plan and visual signal for when you need help.
• Teach your children how to get help. Instruct them not to get involved in the violence between you and your partner. Plan a code word to signal that they should get help or leave the house.
• Tell your children that violence is never right, even when someone they love is being violent. Tell them that neither you nor they are at fault, and that when anyone is being violent, it is important to keep safe.
• Practice how to get out safely. Practice with your children.
• Plan for what you will do if your children tell your partner of your plan or if your partner otherwise finds out about your plan.
• Keep weapons like guns and knives locked up and as inaccessible as possible.
• Hide an extra set of car keys. Make a habit of backing the car into the driveway and keeping it fuelled. Keep the driver's door unlocked and the other doors locked for a quick escape.
• Try not to wear scarves or long jewellery that could be used to strangle you.
• Create several plausible reasons for leaving the house at different times of the day or night.
• Call a domestic violence hotline periodically to assess your options and get a supportive, understanding ear.
• Keep any evidence of physical abuse, such as photographs of bruises and torn clothing. Keep a journal of all violent incidents, noting dates, events, and threats made.
• If you are injured, go to a doctor or an emergency room. And report what happened to you. Ask that they document your injuries.
• Plan with your children and identify a safe place for them (for example, a room with a lock or a friend's house where they can go for help). Reassure them that their job is to stay safe, not to protect you.
• Acquire job skills as you can, such as learning to type or taking courses at a community college.
• Try to set money aside or ask friends or relatives to hold money for you.
• Store some belongings with a friend or relative. Leave clothing, medications, your identification documentation, a credit card (if possible), and citizenship documents. Also leave children's school/medical records, children's toys, and insurance information. Plus, leave copies of birth certificates, money, and other valued personal possessions with them.
• Make a plan for how you will escape and where you will go. Plan for a quick escape. Leave when it is least expected, for example, during times of agreement and calm.
• Create a false trail. Call motels, real estate agencies, schools in a town at least six hours away from where you plan to relocate. Ask questions that require a call back to your house in order to leave those phone numbers on record.
• Take with you important phone numbers (of friends, relatives, doctors, schools, etc.) and documentation.
• Restraining orders: Keep a certified copy of your restraining order with you at all times. Inform friends, neighbours, and employers that you have a restraining order in effect. Give copies of the restraining order to employers, neighbours, and schools along with a picture of the offender. Call law enforcement to enforce the order.

If You Leave:

• Consider renting a post office box for your mail.
• Be aware that addresses are listed on restraining orders and police reports.
• Be careful to whom you give your new address and phone number.
• Change your work hours if possible.
• Alert school authorities about the situation.
• Consider changing your children's schools.
• Reschedule any appointments that the offender is aware of when you leave.
• Use different stores and frequent different social spots.
• Alert neighbours and request that they call the police if they feel you may be in danger.
• Talk to trusted people about the violence.
• Install security systems if possible. Install a lighting system that turns on when a person is coming close to the house (motion sensitive lights).

• Tell people who take care of your children which individuals are allowed to pick up your children. Explain the situation to them. Also, provide them with a copy of the restraining order.
• Call the telephone company to request caller ID. Ask that your phone be blocked so that your partner nor anyone else will be able to get your new, unlisted phone number.
• Receive ongoing support from domestic violence and mental health service providers.





Restoration: Gods Plan for You

By: Andrew Roebert

We are living in interesting days. There are different things taking place all over the world and they are things that often times can be of concern! Many individuals have been through difficult seasons. But God has something new and I believe it is a time of restoration. A season during which He will do a work of restoring. I receive an email recently from a friend who wrote and said that it felt like the last few years he was in a 'faith school' and things had been a challenge. It is during these 'faith school' seasons that we learn to trust God and to hold on to Him. Faith is the thing that moves God and we can look forward to the work of restoration that He wants to do in our lives.

ORIGINAL CONDITION

The purpose of restoration is to return something to its original condition. As we pass through life, we experience things that affect our condition and this in turn blocks us from what God had in store for us. God wants to bring restoration in our lives so that we can be put back on course for His blueprint for our lives. This is something that only God can do. We cannot restore ourselves. God is the one who can take all we have been through and undo the damage so that we can be restored to all He had intended for us to be.

WHAT THE LOCUSTS HAVE EATEN

Joel 2:25 I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten.

When God restores, He is able to take all the years that have been lost or eaten and give them back to us. Locusts work in a particular way. They swarm in there thousands and descend on crops with military precision and wreak havoc and destruction in all directions in a very short period of time. This is exactly what can happen in our lives and many people who have been through such an experience can identify with this. But God is the one who can undo large-scale destruction and return things to their original condition.

RESTORE NOT REPLACE

Sometimes we may think that God does not want to bring restoration but we think that He will just bring a replacement. I am of the persuasion that God wants to restore and not simply to replace. If we look at the story of Moses we can see how God works. God had a plan for Moses. God wanted to use Moses to bring freedom and release to the nation of Israel. Moses however made mistakes and ended running around the desert for years and years. When this happened God did not simply bring in a replacement to do the job. In due season He brought Moses back and the nation of Israel was free. You see, God restored Moses; He brought him back, out of obscurity and used him just as He had intended. This is how God works. God is in the business of restoration and not replacement.

A LIFETIME IN A FEW YEARS

This is the amazing thing about God. When God restores He can take a lifetime and place it in a few short years. This always gives me hope. If you have ended up wasting time and spending time on things that have robbed you of what God had for you, there is hope. As we allow God to restore our lives we can look forward to this very thing happening in our lives. It is for this reason that it is never too late with God. We are never gone too far or too distant for God to bring restoration of His purposes in our lives. God can do it!

LIFE

Another definition of the term restoration is the concept of bringing back to life. God wants to do just that for us. He wants to restore His life in us. It is, as though, God wants to breathe new life into our lives. Sometimes, as we wonder through life, we die on the inside. We may be physically alive, but we know that on the inside there is a measure of death. This can be the result of many things including the things we have been through or the things we have been exposed to. But God is the source of life and He wants to come and restore life to us. So that we can truly be alive to God on the inside.

RESTORATION AND BROKENESS

This may be a more difficult concept. Let me give you an example: when we restore furniture, it involves several steps.

1. We first have to disassemble the furniture

2. We have to strip away all the years of wear and tear.

3. Then we can add new materials and put it all back together.

Perhaps this does not sound like a very good experience to us, but the reality is that it is very rewarding as the true beauty and glory of the piece is brought out. Sometimes in the process of restoration there is the element of brokenness. Some things must go but most things stay. This is something we must embrace and not reject as God is doing something wonderful.



THE PURPOSE

Just as in the natural when we restore furniture there is a purpose. Restoration is part of the process to prepare something for further and future use. We don't restore a piece of furniture to store it in the garage. We restore furniture to use it and bring it out of obscurity and give it value and purpose. It is just the same in our spiritual lives. God has a plan and purpose for each one of us and He wants to bring restoration so that He can use us, just as He intended to. Once a piece of furniture has been restored it can be replaced in a position of priority and visibility. That is exactly what God wants to do with you and me.

WHAT IS RESTORED?

Not any old piece of furniture is restored! Usually it is only pieces of furniture that have a value that are taken and restored. They are restored because they are worth the effort. You are worth the effort to God to be restored. You and I have great value to God and He wants to restore and use each one of us. Remember, you are valuable and precious to God and He loves you dearly. May the restoring power of the living God be a reality in your life.

> Look at the birds! They don't worry about what to eat—they don't need to sow or reap or store up food—for your heavenly Father feeds them. And you are far more valuable to him. (Matthew 6:26)



AGAIN AND AGAIN

By: Andrew Roebert

We can go to the Lord with everything. But what is even more of a delight is that we can keep on going to Him. We will not exhaust Him. We will not run out of opportunities to go to the Lord and call on Him. He is always waiting, always ready and always willing to receive us. Again and again we can go to the Lord. The problem comes when we begin to think that we can't go to Him. But the truth is that the door is always open.

NEW MERCY FROM GOD EVERY MORNING

With each new day, God has something new for each of us. It is like we have fresh bread available to us each day. There is not one day that we have to eat what God did yesterday. With God, each day is like starting all over again.

Lamentations 3:22-23 Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

The key word here is 'NEW'. New mercy and new compassion every morning. When you got up this morning there was new mercy and compassion for you. When you get tomorrow morning there will be more of His new compassion and mercy for you.

WE CAN APPROACH GOD

We can approach God again and again. God is open and receptive to our approaches. We do not need to fear. We can approach God with anything that is on our hearts and He is always ready and willing to listen and hear. *Hebrews 4:16 So let us come boldly to the very throne of God and stay there to receive his mercy and to find grace to help us in our times of need.* The key here is to go to the Lord and to stay there. Then we can receive His mercy and His grace.

HE IS WAITING

Yet the Lord still waits for you to come to him so he can show you his love; he will conquer you to bless you, just as he said. For the Lord is faithful to his promises. Blessed are all those who wait for him to help them.
(Isaiah 30:18)

The thought that God is waiting for me to come to Him is a source of great joy and great delight. Look at God's motivation for waiting for us, so that He can show us His love. I want to experience more of His love. How about you? Keep on going to God; take all your issues and concerns to Him because He is waiting. Waiting to be good to each one of us. Yes, He wants to be good to you.

DON'T STOP GOING TO GOD

Don't turn to other things. Perhaps God has not come through for you, as you would have expected. But that does not mean we stop going to Him. We must keep on going back again and again**.**

Psalm 139:16 You saw me before I was born and scheduled each day of my life before I began to breathe. Every day was recorded in your book!

On the basis of this great fact, we can go to God without hesitation. It is for this same reason that we should not turn to other things. No matter what, don't stop going to God.

APPROACHING GOD EVERY DAY

This is the type of lifestyle that we need to develop. A lifestyle of daily going back to God should be our goal. Running on our own strength was not what God intended for us. Running on His strength was what He had planned for us.

Psalm 5:3 Each morning I will look to you in heaven and lay my requests before you, praying earnestly.

Have you approached God today for anything? Call on Him. Develop a lifestyle of going to God over and over again. He will never stop loving you.

GOD IS INTERESTED IN EACH OF US

We don't approach God to make Him aware of our situation. We don't go to God so that He can see our need. He already knows. We go to God because we love and we need Him. God knows that we need Him. But sometimes we don't realize how much we need Him When we realize this we can run to Him.

> *Psalm 139:17-18 How precious it is, Lord, to realize that you are thinking about me constantly! I can't even count how many times a day your thoughts turn toward me. And when I waken in the morning, you are still thinking of me!*

AGAIN AND AGAIN

> *2 Corinthians 1:9-10 We felt we were doomed to die and saw how powerless we were to help ourselves; but that was good, for then we put everything into the hands of God, who alone could save us, for he can even raise the dead. 10And he did help us and saved us from a terrible death; yes, and we expect him to do it again and again.*



You may feel that things are beyond your control. It may even feel like you are dying. You may feel powerless and helpless. These are not bad emotions. They are good in that they make us realize just how much we need God. The joy of this scripture is that 'He did help us and saved us.' That is what God wants to do. And we can expect Him to do just that again and again. This can happen as we come to Him again and again.



YOU ARE GOING TO BE *Alright*

By: Andrew W Roebert

It is great to know that we can have confidence in God. To know that we can trust Him. To know that He is working in our lives. Things are not out of control, God has everything in hand. There is an old song: 'He's got the whole world in His hand'. It goes on: 'He's got you and me brother/sister in His hand'. Because of this we can know that we are going to be alright.

GOD HAS A PLAN

For each of us God has a plan. You are not exempted or excluded.

Jeremiah 29:11 For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord.

Just look at the following:
There is a plan and God has a plan for you. God knows the plan that He has for you. It is good to know that God knows the blueprint for our lives. Sometimes it feels like we are just tossed around by circumstances. In the middle of all this it is great to know that we can have the knowledge that God knows what is going on for each of us! I love the phrase: 'Declares (says) the LORD' (Jeremiah 29:11 - NIV) This is confidence, knowing that God has the master plan.

GOD HAS NOT FORGOTTEN YOU

Can a mother forget her newborn child?

Isaiah 49:15 – 16 Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of My hands; your walls are ever before Me.

'I will not forget you!' - You may feel like God has forgotten you, but He has not! Where man may forget in vital areas, God never forgets even the smallest detail of your life. We are engraved on the palm of His hands. He is aware of our issues and challenges.





WHAT ARE THESE PLANS THAT GOD HAS FOR US?

Great plans! Not plans we have for ourselves, which He approves of, but plans that He has for us. Plans that God has specifically designed and created especially for you. This is a great and special thought! The plans that God has for you are for your good.

Jeremiah 29:11 For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord. They are plans for good …

Plans for our good - What a thought! 'Plans to prosper you' – That's what the NIV translation says. 'Thoughts of peace' – That's what the KJV says. God has plans for each of us, plans for our good, plans to prosper and thoughts of peace towards us. What a great God!

GOD DOES NOT HAVE PLANS FOR EVIL!

God's plans for us are for our good! Not for our evil! They are blessings to us, the things He has in store for us.

Jeremiah 29:11 For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord. They are plans for good and not for evil …

But despite this, sometimes, bad things happen. That's just how life is. God is so gracious that He even turns those things into good for us.

Romans 8:28 We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.

God has NO plans of evil towards us. And He can turn anything around!

A LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

God wants to be a constant source of hope in our lives. His plans for our lives include giving us HOPE! HOPE is an essential aspect in our lives.

Jeremiah 29:11 – 13 For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord. They are plans for good and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

Without hope we do not have the strength for tomorrow. God has a future and a hope for each of us. We can have confidence in this.

ANSWERED PRAYER

This is one of God's plans for us. That we would experience the reality of answers to our prayers.

Jeremiah 29:12 In those days when you pray, I will listen.

Part of God's plan is that we would have a knowledge that He listens to us when we pray. This is a great thought! Part of God's plan for us is answered prayer.



FINDING GOD

This is another plan that God has for us. That we would 'FIND' Him and know Him!

Jeremiah 29:13 You will find Me when you seek Me, if you look for Me in earnest.

I love the phrase – 'You WILL find Me'. We need to SEEK Him and LOOK for Him in earnest. And the promise is that if we do this we WILL find Him! God wants to be a reality in our lives.

YOU ARE GOING TO BE ALRIGHT

If you have entrusted your life to God, then you can have confidence. If you are endeavoring to seek Him and look for Him you can feel secure! God has plans for your life that only He knows. God is still in control regardless of how the situation may appear. He loves each one of us! And has good plans for us! Start praising the Lord for what He has in store and allow expectation to rise within you knowing that God has got a plan and you are going to be alright


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