

NEW YEAR'S DAY 2023

1 CHRONICLES 29

# FAITH AND FINANCE



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**FIRST BYRON CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH**

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# INTRODUCTION

Our finances reflect our faith. Our faith is expressed in our finances. Our finances are an opportunity for faith. One way or another our faith and our finances are connected.

Jesus realized this and therefore spoke about money more than any other subject. That's probably part of the reason he was criticized so much. Because few of us like to connect our faith and our finances. We prefer to think of our faith being in one compartment and our finances being in another compartment and try to keep them separated, usually only opening one at a time.

This disconnect between faith and finance might make us materially richer but it also makes us spiritually poorer. The closer we can connect them, the spiritually richer we will be. **How can we connect faith and finance to make us spiritually richer?**

I ask this question because our church family is embarking on a massive fundraising campaign. We are hoping to raise \$5.8 million of an \$8 million budget so that we can begin building our new family ministry center.

When we think of what we can give to this project, we tend to think about how little we can afford to give or how much pain and loss is involved in the giving. At least, that's how I often think, if I'm honest. When I look at the massive amount needed and how little I can give, I think, "It's hardly worth trying." Then, when I think about what we would have to give up from our limited family budget, I see a vacation evaporate, I see a new boat sail away over the horizon, I see fishing trips reduced, I see dental work delayed, and so on. It's painful. It's hard. Is it worth so much pain for such a little dent on this \$5.8 million budget?

I need help to connect my faith and my finances and I believe God gives me that help in 1 Chronicles 29.

## BACKGROUND

David wanted to build God a beautiful house for him to be worshipped in. Because David had been involved in so much military bloodshed, God told David that he could only gather the materials for a temple, but that his son Solomon would build it. In 1 Chronicles 29, David threw himself into this fundraising campaign. In doing so, he shows us how God connects faith and finances.

The heart of this chapter is the people's joyful freewill giving to the Temple project (5, 6, 9, 14, 17). We'll come back to that at the end, but I want us to focus mainly on the three truths that God connected with this giving.



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# 1. IT'S GOD'S HOUSE (1-5)

David's opening words are highly significant. Four times he emphasizes that this is about building a house for God. It's not primarily for him or even for the people of Israel, but for God.

- The palace will not be for man but for the Lord God (1)
- So I have provided for the house of my God, so far as I was able (2)
- Because of my devotion to the house of my God I give it to the house of my God (3).

David was reminding his hearers that although they would get benefit and blessing there, he doesn't make it all about that. Rather, his appeal was based first and foremost on it being a place for God's special presence, a place where God would make himself known, a place where God would draw near, a place God would be lifted up, a place that would be all about God. It would be a physical witness to all who passed by that God is, that God lives, that God is important, that God is worth it, that God is God.

## CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

We already have a beautiful and substantial sanctuary where God lives in a special way and is worshipped. God makes himself known in a unique way here, he draws especially near in the public worship of God's people, he is lifted up as he is praised, prayed to, and proclaimed. Why shouldn't we be satisfied with that? Why do we need a family ministry center?

The Temple had different areas for different purposes. There was the Holy of Holies (limited to the High Priest), and then there was the Holy Place (limited to the priests, there was the inner court (limited to the Jews), and there was an outer court (open to the Gentiles). Each of these areas had different purposes but they were all part of God's building, God's courts. The outer court was a place that outsiders could begin to know God and be introduced to the faith of the Bible. The inner court was a place for fellowship and service for God's people. So, although the different areas had different purposes, they were all parts of God's house and all were about making God known.

So although this project is not raising funds for a worship sanctuary, it is raising funds for God's house. Although we trust that many in our church family and many outside the church will get blessing and benefit there, it's first and foremost about being a place for God to work in his people and in those who are not yet his people.

So as we begin 2023, let's connect our faith and our finances by reminding ourselves that it's God's house we're giving to. It's to make God known better in our church and community. It's a place where we will proclaim him, praise him, pray to him, experience his nearness, and get training and education to serve him better everywhere. At a time when churches are shrinking and even closing, it's an opportunity for us to build something that will be a physical witness to all who pass by: God is, God lives, God is important, God is worth it, God is God.

**AS OUR HOUSES MAKE A STATEMENT ABOUT US  
SO GOD'S HOUSE MAKES A STATEMENT ABOUT GOD**



**That's one connection between faith and finance.  
Any others?**



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## 2. IT'S GOD'S MONEY (6-19)

Nine times David emphasized that all money and property is God's. We are not owners and we're not even co-owners. God alone is the owner of everything and we are simply stewards or managers of what he gives us for a time.

- For all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord (11).
- Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all (12).
- For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you (14).
- O Lord our God, all this abundance that we have provided for building you a house for your holy name comes from your hand and is all your own (16).

Although David highlights the people's giving, he ultimately traces it to God's giving. They couldn't give anything unless God had first given to them. They wouldn't give anything unless they recognized that God had first given to them.

### CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

We should teach this vital truth to our children from their youngest years and constantly repeat it to them and to ourselves. There is nothing so hard to remember than that God is the owner of all my money, all my property, all my investment, and I am just a temporary manager who will one day have to give an account to the Owner.

When our bank statement or IRA statement or investment statement arrives, and we see our name on it, maybe we should simply score that out and replace it with "God."

It doesn't start being God's money when we start earning a certain amount. It doesn't stop being God's money once we earn a certain amount. It's God's money from the first cent to the last million.

When we look at our houses, our properties, our cottages, our trailers, our boats, our toys, we should never look at them and say, "Look at all I have," but rather, "Look at all God gave me."

Or when we look at what we don't have, our limited finances, the little savings and the tiny givings, we don't say, "Look at how little I have," but rather, "Look at what God has decided is best for me at this time in my life. I must be content and live within that constraint."

This changes what we give and how we give. We no longer think, "What can I give to God?" but "What has God given me and how can I manage that best for him?"

**SOME ARE SAVERS,  
SOME ARE SPENDERS,  
ALL ARE STEWARDS.**



**That's another connection between faith and finance.  
Any others?**



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## 3. IT'S GOD'S SALVATION (20-22)

The people gave willingly, freely, cheerfully, not reluctantly, resentfully, or slowly. They began by offering themselves to the Lord and then their stuff.

- Who then will offer willingly, consecrating himself today to the Lord?" Then the leaders of fathers' houses made their freewill offerings (5-6).
- Then the people rejoiced because they had given willingly, for with a whole heart they had offered freely to the Lord (9).
- "But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able thus to offer willingly? (14)
- In the uprightness of my heart I have freely offered all these things, and now I have seen your people, who are present here, offering freely and joyously to you (17).

How was this possible? How did the channel between their faith and their finances connect so openly and powerfully. The channel of "It's God's house" opened the pipeline about 25%. The channel of "It's God's money" opened the sluice gate about another 25%. But the chapter climaxes by reminding us that "It's God's salvation" that burst the pipeline and overflowed in a gushing giving.

They ended with a massive tribute to the God who saved through the sacrifice of another to bring them into joyful eating and drinking fellowship with himself.

### CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

We give when we remember it's God's house. We give more when we remember it's God's money. We give most when we remember it's God's salvation.

Israel saw God's salvation through the sacrifice of another in their place, but they only saw it in shadow form. The sacrifices were pictures of what they needed and God would provide to forgive them and bring them into his friendship and fellowship. But it was like watching a theater show without lights or microphones.

In the New Testament, God turned on the lights and gave his Son a microphone to proclaim his provision of salvation as clearly and loudly as possible.

When we get that salvation, we get giving willingly, freely, joyfully, whole-heartedly, and sincerely.

OUR FREEWILL GIVING IS FROM  
GOD'S FREEWILL GIVING



# SUMMARY



## THE NEXT CHAPTER

**Giving is an opportunity to increase our spiritual riches.** As we give, we learn more about God's house, God's money, and God's salvation, and therefore also get more of God's joy. As we experience cheerful giving, we experience what God's heart is like in all its cheerful generosity, especially in giving us his Son and in his Son's giving of himself.

**Giving is an opportunity to increase others' spiritual riches.** As we give, we may have to deny ourselves certain expenditures and have opportunity to explain why to our children. We have an opportunity to proclaim the rich and enriching "Why?" to our community too. "It's God's house, it's God's money, and it's God's salvation."

**Prayer:** Rich and enriching God, enrich my faith by helping me to give for the right reasons (for the truth) in the right way (with joy). Amen

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do your finances say about your faith?
2. What examples are there of Jesus speaking about money?
3. What hinders you from giving and how can you help yourself to give?
4. Which of the three truths will help you change the way you give and what you give?
5. How can we help our children learn these truths and give from an early age?
6. How much joy do you get in giving and how can you increase that joy?

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