

## **Living by Faith**

As I sit here at this keyboard, I am very conscious and thankful for the lessons my family and I have learned as we have practiced the life of faith and the methodology of living by faith. Every once in a while though I hear someone blurt out something that probably needs re-evaluating because I don't think they don't understand living by faith.

We came home from the mission field in January to attend the funeral of my uncle, Rev Art Sheppard. I'm so glad we were able to do that and honour a man and his family who have for years lived by faith and preached the gospel wherever the Lord opened a door for them. He and his wife Greta did it by faith for 60 years. They didn't end up with a big bank account like maybe one or two others may have done and therefore have given a wrong impression to others about faith missionaries or ministries. Art and Greta were faith ministries from start to finish.

One of the problems that we can have in life is that it is easy to get or create a wrong impression and then that wrong impression is applied across the board to all who use the same phrase or word to cover their own circumstances. For 27 years now my wife and I have lived by faith in the Lord for our income. By that I mean we haven't had a fixed or secure salary amount that we receive month by month but rather we rely on the Lord to meet our needs and to be content with what we receive from Him. That may mean that there can be anything from just a few dollars to several hundred dollars difference in what we receive month by month. Some have thought, I'm sure, that we were alright because we had what appeared to be a big church behind us or like I heard someone say the other day "but you've got a rich father". Since we have arrived home one or two have given us a small offering, wishing it could be more but saying we're pensioners now and this all we can do. I receive it with faith and thanksgiving and bless them for their faith.

As many of you know, my parents were hard working farmers and didn't own land in one of the more fertile areas of Saskatchewan, just a normal area where you have to work and pray hard to get a harvest. I heard an old saying once about farmers, they're never rich until they sell out or die.

When I was about 12 years old (approx 50 years ago), one afternoon a neighbour who was sowing his fields beside our land saw that my dad was stopped to pump gas into his tractor and maybe have a bite of a sandwich and something to drink, so he stopped his outfit nearby too. As he walked over to my dad he called out, "George, have you got anything to drink?" In those day's, dad used to carry an old Miracle Whip bottle or a sealer jar of tea inside a big winter wool socking (I don't know if thermoses had been invented yet or not but...) and he was partaking of it as Joey walked up. "Sure Joey" he said, "I've got a spot of tea here, it's cold though." "...That would sure be great George, I'm so thirsty."

In the next few moments my dad bought a farm over a cup of tea. That young man and his father had just decided they were going to sell out and my dad was among the first to know and it resulted in a great blessing for my family, as well as lost souls around the globe. The young man's father asked my dad a few days later as they were working out the details of the transaction, "...but George, why do you want more land? You've got enough for you and your family." My dad's immediate reply was, "Pete, I want to be able to give more to the Lord's work and to missionaries and evangelists." Pete immediately said, "George, you need to be careful with those guys." Dad was careful, he was careful to give repeatedly and time after time, just as he said that day. For more than 60 years he has been careful to give as he felt the Holy Spirit prompting him to give, accordingly as the Lord had prospered him or even sacrificially as the Lord directed him to take a step of faith. He may never be a "millionaire" but he knew what he sowed into God's kingdom, God could then multiply, turn it around and give him back a good harvest. (Luke 6:38) That harvest maybe was material blessings here and now but most certainly it will be counted up in crowns and stars in his crown as I'm sure many souls and saints from Africa, from Asia, from Central and South America and also here in Canada (dad sowed continually in Trossachs Camp, Full Gospel Bible Institute/ Eston College, overseas missions, etc) and the USA will one day say, "Thank you Mr. Sheppard, because you gave, so and so could come to my home or nation and they told us of Jesus great love and desire to have us as his sons and daughters and I became a Christian that day".

**How about you? Are you sowing so that you can reap a harvest?** Of either the temporal or the eternal kind? **God will prosper a faith filled obedient servant who is diligent to practice the sowing and reaping theology, I mean faithful in tithing and giving offerings just**

**as the Bible teaches in both the old and new testaments.** That too is what keeps us alive as servants of God. We too must practice the same.

Another wrong impression I'd like to perhaps dispel. Just because you think that a certain preacher is doing well you don't need to bless him with a good offering. If he has ministered to you of the eternal things, isn't it right that he receive of your temporal things? Paul addresses such a theme in just about those words in Corinthians. He said, yes they should receive temporal blessings even as they have been faithful to minister eternal things.

The other day someone I know well suggested that a certain other minister must be rich or at least OK and because he lived in a good home or had had a good job and surely he must have a good fat pension check every month, ... Let us not look upon the outward so much or generalize so. If God speaks to you to give, why don't you give? You will be the blessed one, unless of course you give out of a begrudging and not a joyful heart. Perhaps that is what has soured us on giving or sowing and reaping – we give because of an expressed or supposed need and therefore out of duty instead of out of joy and with thankfulness.

How should we give? 2Cor. 9 still says the Lord loves a “cheerful giver.” God loves a generous, obedient and faith filled giver too. **Why should you give?** Give because you love to give something. Give because you want a harvest. Give because you need a harvest. Give because He tells you to give that specific amount and you want to be obedient. Give because you've got it to give. Give before you don't have it to give. Give it so the devil can't rob it or give before he can rob it from you. Give because you love Jesus and are thankful someone once used his or her money to come and tell you or someone you know the message of the Gospel. Give so that others can hear and have another opportunity to be saved. Give and ask God to direct you in your giving so that He will get the Glory! Give because you're grateful that the Lord has used such and such a ministry and you want them to be able to continue on being fruitful. Give because you believe God wants to and will use such and such a new ministry or young man and his wife as evangelists or missionaries (*some friends believed the same about us years ago and that's how we got to obey God's call too*). Give so that someone in a far off, less fortunate land can hear for perhaps the first time the message of Christ's love for them. Give so someone can go in your place and preach the Gospel or teach the Word to others. Give because you want to be an encourager and a helper and not a discourager. Give that generous offering when God tells you to so that He can release recompense to you. Give because God

told you to give. Give what God told you to give – it may not be just money but a car, a smile, a property, your time or a skill. Give because it's your daddy's money and he's got lots (God does have lots you know and it isn't that He needs your money but you need to sow it so He can bless you more, continuously – release your seed so you can reap a harvest!). My teenage daughter Arlene used to say such as she'd give a coin or two to a beggar; knowing daddy would give her more as she needed it – she told someone I had lots of money! I must have! Give because you need to give. Give because you didn't give last time God told you too and now you want to become obedient to His voice. Give to prove the Word is true, that God can and will open the very windows of heaven over you in blessing. Give because Jesus told us to. Give because Paul taught it too. Give because your pastor told you to give and plant seed. Give for whatever your reason – maybe you just want or need a harvest or breakthrough! Give because you want to begin giving again. Give to break the grip of stinginess off of you heart. Give to break off old condemnation from your heart. Give to prove God is true to His Word. Give to seal a vow with the Lord. Give to develop a generous heart. Practice sound theology, practice sowing and reaping. Practice tithing, even if you haven't done so before or you tried it once and you felt it didn't work for you. Remember, a seed takes time to germinate and needs the right environment before it can grow and produce a harvest. Practice giving by faith, even if you think it could never work for you. **GIVE UNTIL IT HURTS – THAT'S WHEN IT GETS EXCITING AS YOU GIVE SACRIFICIALLY TO HIM!**

The Lord's promise is still true in Malachi when He says He'll open the windows of heaven over you. Prove him. Test Him. **GIVE UNTIL YOU'VE REALLY GIVEN!** Give until you have nothing left to give and you're giving by faith. Then God can command a blessing to come your way and I tell you, **God will bless you in proportion to your giving!!!** A generous giver will receive a bountiful harvest. **Your generosity might not appear as generous as the next person's, but God knows what you have left after you've given.** Praise His name forever!!!

Welcome to the Seed time and Harvest experience – it's an exciting life of faith.

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*PS: Please feel free to write/blog us your comments or thoughts. DS*