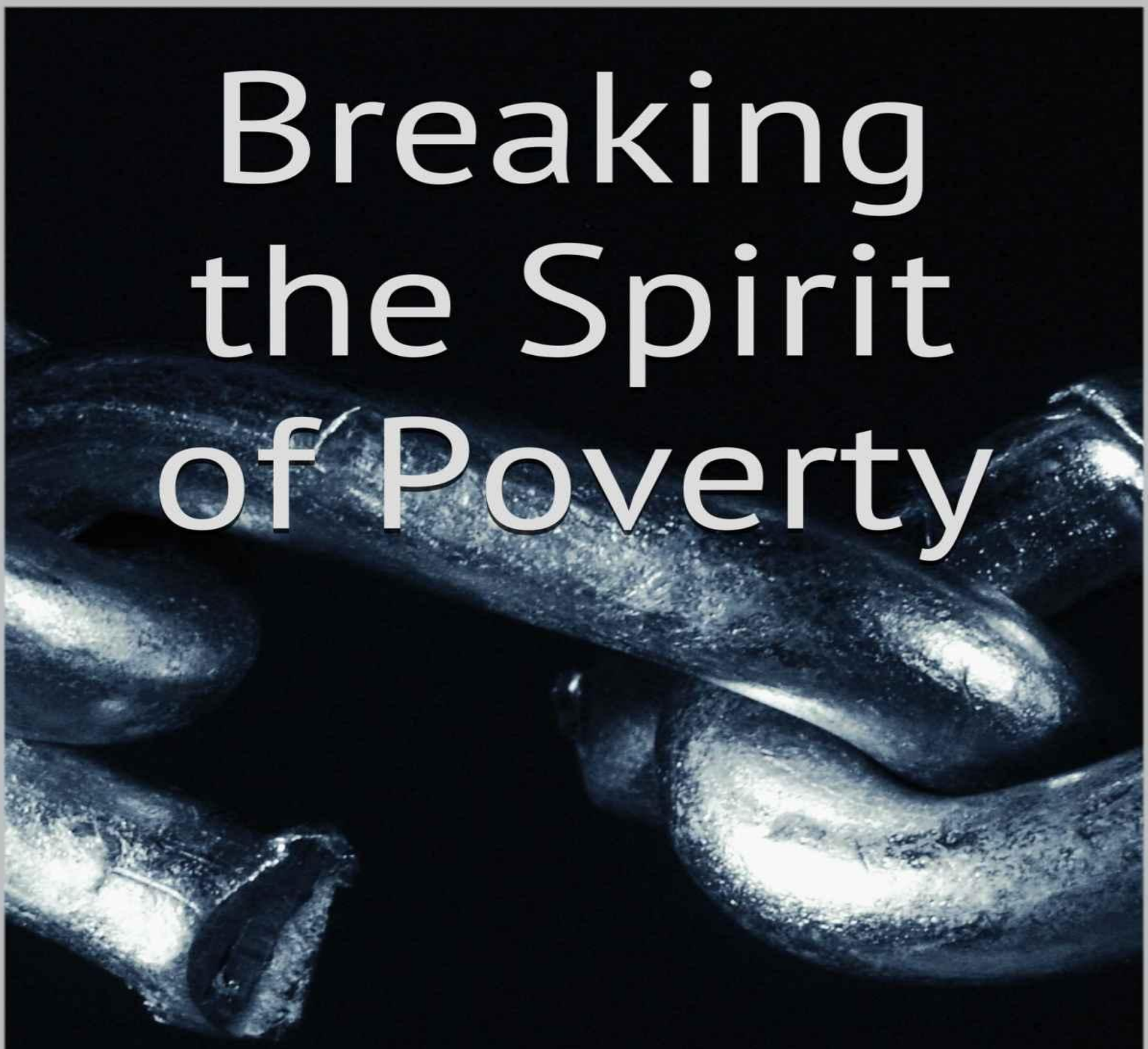
Breaking the Spirit of Poverty



Freedom to Give - Freedom to Live

Jan Grace

Breaking the Spirit of Poverty

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Breaking the Spirit of Poverty

A Good Beginning

Before anything, good or bad, there was God. He was before all things, and in him all things stay together. People debate it, trash it, ignore it, and say it isn't true; but one thing is certain: they can't change it.

For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. (Colossians 1:16 - 1:17 NKJV)

In the beginning, God...

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:1 NKJV)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. (John 1:1 - 1:2 NKJV)

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction. (Proverbs 1:7 NKJV)

...These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God. (Revelation 3:14 NKJV)

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last. (Revelation 22:13 NKJV)

Anything good starts with God. I don't know how else to say it. Whatever the subject, if it's good it began with God. If it's going to stay good, then God must be involved throughout the process. And you can just bet that God knows how to end something in a good way.

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. (James 1:17 NKJV)

Every principle and every law God established in the earth is good. Every gift he has ever given is good. However, there is the flip side to good. Or maybe a better way of saying it would be:
man has found a bad way to use something God created as good. Of course man has had just a little bit of encouragement along the way.

Evil has lied to the world about this good God. It has used good things in a bad way, trying to bring dishonor to and contempt for the One known as Good. The good God, creator of man and woman, also created such things as words, sex, government, and money. All for good, yet each have been hijacked by evil and used to corrupt mankind rather than serve him.

But just because something has been used in a bad way doesn't change its original purpose.

This book is about a good God, with a good plan. He created a good earth, with good (and plentiful) resources. And he created it for good, not evil. It's about reclaiming the good thing, and using it in a good way; as intended by the good God.

And it's about money. Created as good, used as bad. Created to serve, used to rule. Idolized, it blinds our eyes. Pursued, it runs us into the ground. Wasted, many opportunities go unfulfilled. Pinched, fields of dreams lie as fallow ground. But used wisely, as was intended, it is a tremendous blessing and a dependable servant.

Money, a little or a lot, can make or break the strongest saint. It can break the bonds of the world's most loving couple. It can turn the head of an honest politician. But it can also provide food and clothing for many starving, naked children.

It's just money. It has no soul, no heart, no conscience. It doesn't take sides, won't give an opinion, and doesn't care if it buys lottery tickets or loaves of bread.

It's just money. All it was ever created to do was serve mankind. And that's what this book is about. Money is money, until it becomes our focus, our passion, our god. Then it becomes a curse, a spirit, and the outcome, the fruit, is poverty.

This book is also about recognizing the spirit of poverty and breaking free from that spirit. And throughout these pages we'll discover that God wants to restore the gift of finances to its original intent; serve his people for good.

His people, rightfully handling the word of truth, can be trusted to rightfully handle the gift of gold, for good.

A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. The name of the first is the Pishon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. And the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. (Genesis 2:10 - 2:12 ESV)

Ignorance Is No Defense

Probably everyone has heard the Latin phrase, "Ignorantia legis neminem excusat", or "Ignorance of the law is no excuse". Just because one says they don't know, or they don't understand, doesn't give them a free pass with the law.

In the spiritual realm the same is true. The root of poverty, the evil one himself, doesn't care one iota about the law; after all, he's known as the lawless one. Whether you know what to do or not, he'll try all he can to squeeze the living daylight out of you.

Knowing the will of God is the primary defense against the devil. Because of that, he wants you to be ignorant of the word of God.

Another way to say this - Ignorance is: no defense. Or, understanding is: a good defense.

...lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices. (2 Corinthians 2:11 NKJV)

You just may be wondering what all this stuff has to do with breaking the spirit of poverty. Breaking the spirit of poverty is one thing. But God's desire, and mine, is for everyone of God's children to get free and live free of the enemy's influence. And the best way to have that happen is to understand who is behind the spirit of poverty, how does he operate, and how to stay free from his traps.

It's more than just paying the tithe. It's more than giving to a special missionary cause. It is a combination of trusting in the Lord and being not wise in our own eyes. Trusting and doing the right thing because it's the right thing to do at that time. That's why we're discussing this from every angle I can think of.

God's Attitude

Poverty, according to the dictionary, is the state of lacking sufficient money or material possessions. But according to biblical principles and examples, poverty is much more than just the lack of funds or possessions. It is a spirit, a force, that enslaves men and women. It becomes their mind set, the reason why they live the way they do.

God's people may not have a lot of money. At times they may be downright poor. But being poor and under the curse of the spirit of poverty are two completely separate things. NEVER does God want his people (or anyone, for that matter) living under the curse of poverty.

God's attitude toward abundance and lack can be summarized in the following passage:

But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.

As it is written: "He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever."

Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness. (2 Corinthians 9:6 - 9:10 NKJV)

Many people have the idea that God is very much against wealth and riches. If that was the case, why did he put so many resources in the earth? He has created every precious gem, every valuable mineral, every costly metal and fossil fuel. He has given mankind the knowledge to find and refine such

commodities; and the knowledge to use them for the betterment of his people.

God is extremely wealthy! And yet no one is more generous. He does not wring his hands or shake his head when he thinks about our needs. He is rich to all who call upon him (Romans 10:12). He is so rich; he never runs out of anything.

God is able (and willing) to make all grace ABOUND toward you and I; so we'll have the ability and the resources to have an abundance for EVERY GOOD WORK.

"And you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day." (Deuteronomy 8:18 NKJV)

The power to get wealth includes the wisdom to use it, and not abuse it. The poverty spirit will abuse it, waste it, and blame God for his stinginess. But the heart free from the spirit of poverty will allow God full access to everything it has and everything it is.

And that leads to one very exciting life!

The Root of Poverty

"Money is the root of all evil", someone will erringly recite. The correct quote is:

"For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil".

In context it reads like so:

But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which

some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. (1 Timothy 6:9 - 6:10 NKJV)

Can you find the key word? The key word and the root of poverty are basically one and the same. The word is "desire". Not "rich" as some people may say. There are many references in the bible about people whom God made rich. But "desire to be rich" and "the love of money" are cut from the same cloth. They both indicate a passion for money and riches; an unhealthy passion.

"Those who DESIRE to be rich" have to contend with the spirit of the evil one; the master of sinful schemes and the originator of original sin. His presence, whether in the garden or the board room, signifies trouble unless his snake skin is removed and he's revealed for who and what he really is, the devil.

Who is the devil? He's the great pretender, the author of pride and father of lies. He's the one who makes barren. He's the robber, the thief in the night. A terror to terrorists and the proverbial burr under the saddle. He is the instigator of all wars, and the chief antagonist of true peace.

He was the head architect at the Tower of Babel, Nimrod's star of the morning. He's the prince of the power of the air, the ruler of darkness, and the epitome of evil.

He was created by the Almighty to serve, yet he chose to rule. He became Adam's lord, Eve's deceiver, and creation's cancer. His influence caused man, who was created to rule, to bow before a fallen foe.

The devil is the root of poverty. You see the devil and the love of money speak the same language.

Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, “All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.” (Matthew 4:8 - 4:9 NKJV)

The love of money offers such outstanding deals, just like the devil did. "See all of this? I can get it all for you, if you will pursue me; make me your god."

Notice the harlot's enticing speech in Proverbs 7.

And saw among the simple, I perceived among the youths, a young man devoid of understanding, passing along the street near her corner; and he took the path to her house in the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night. And there a woman met him, with the attire of a harlot, and a crafty heart. She was loud and rebellious, her feet would not stay at home. At times she was outside, at times in the open square, lurking at every corner. So she caught him and kissed him; with an impudent face she said to him: "I have peace offerings with me; today I have paid my vows. So I came out to meet you, diligently to seek your face, and I have found you. I have spread my bed with tapestry, colored coverings of Egyptian linen. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. Come, let us take our fill of love until morning; let us delight ourselves with love. For my husband is not at home; he has gone on a long journey; he has taken a bag of money with him, and will come home on the appointed day." With her enticing speech she caused him to yield, with her flattering lips she seduced him. Immediately he went after her, as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks, till an arrow struck his liver. As a bird hastens to the snare, he did not know it would cost his life. (Proverbs 7:7 - 7:23 NKJV)

Hear "love" call out to the young man, devoid of understanding. It sounds exactly like the enticing words the spirit of poverty uses to draw someone into the pursuit of wealth and riches. "Look at what I offer. Smell the sweetness of my perfume. Feel the heat of my body. I have come for you. Do with me as you please. I'm yours."

Her enticing speech caused him to yield, and with her flattering lips she seduced him. This story has been repeated over and over throughout history. Brave men and women have fallen prey; and have been consumed.

By the love of money!

And just like its chief purveyor, the master at promising things he'll never deliver, that's how the love of money operates. The end of the game is brokenness, poverty, and death.

No one pursues poverty. No one runs after brokenness. No one votes for trouble. The spirit of poverty promises the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. It makes for a wonderful commercial, but its final reward is emptiness and an emaciated soul.

They soon forgot his works; they did not wait for his counsel, but lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tested God in the desert. And he gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul. (Psalm 106:13 - 106:15 NKJV).

The devil wanted to be God. He still wants to be, tries to be; but he can only steal, kill, and destroy. Nothing more. Period.

This is the root of poverty. Follow the fruit to find the root. If the fruit is death and destruction, not goodness and life, it comes from the devil.

Good God. Bad devil.

But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. (1 Timothy 6:9 NKJV)

Yes, those who DESIRE to be rich...fall...into the hands and rewards of the spirit, the root, the father of poverty; the devil.

Characteristics of the Spirit of Poverty

And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses. Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man

yielded plentifully. “And he thought within himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?’ “So he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. ‘And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.” ’ “But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’ “So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." (Luke 12:15 - 12:21 NKJV)

Covetousness is an indication that the spirit of poverty is lurking close by. Notice the certain rich man's focus. Himself. No one else. Not a wife, a child, a parent, a church, a beggar; no one else was even considered when he was contemplating what to do with all his good fortune. His chief concern was how he should store all he had gained. God called him a fool. And that was putting it mildly.

Here is a list of characteristics, indicators, of the spirit of poverty.

Lazy

How long will you slumber, O sluggard? When will you rise from your sleep? So shall your poverty come on you like a prowler, and your need like an armed man. (Proverbs 6:9-11 NKJV)

People who have an "entitlement mentality" can fit into this category. I'm not referring to people who *can't* get out of bed, or those who have had financial, social, or some other kind of trouble. This is about those who *won't* get up, get to work, or do something for someone else. Yet this spirit loves to scream, "I have my needs!" Too bad the prowler has stolen everything they ever had - including their dignity.

The lazy man says, “There is a lion outside! I shall be slain in the streets. (Proverbs 22:13 NKJV)

Laziness declares - I can't. It isn't safe. I have to steer clear of that area UNTIL SOMEONE COMES AND GETS RID OF THE LIONS. Yep, that's lazy, and it's sad.

Selfish

There is one who scatters, yet increases more; and there is one who withholds more than is right, but it leads to poverty. (Proverbs 11:24 NKJV)

The selfish person is one who hangs on to whatever they have with a tight fist. Whether it's a lot or a little, their fist is squeezed shut. But a tight fist cannot receive anything from anyone else, including God. It's physically impossible to put something into someone's hand when their fist is closed. And, it's spiritually impossible to pour into the life of someone whose heart is squeezed shut.

Unteachable

Poverty and shame will come to him who disdains correction, but he who regards a rebuke will be honored. (Proverbs 13:18 NKJV)

Disdain means to have contempt for someone or something. The person who will not receive correction is someone who believes they are above the need for correction. They know everything, and no one can convince them otherwise. Unfortunately, this person loves to blame everyone and everything else for their lack of resources, and lack of respect.

All Talk, No Action

Work brings profit, but mere talk leads to poverty! (Proverbs 14:23 NLT)

Simple isn't it? Yet those bound by the spirit of poverty will talk all the more about how rough things are. Sad.

Impulsive

The plans of the diligent lead surely to plenty, but those of everyone who is hasty, surely to poverty. (Proverbs 21:5 NKJV)

Shooting from the hip may have worked well for the gunslingers of the old westerns. But that isn't the way it works in real life. The word diligent seems to indicate work, effort, study and purpose. It isn't enough to "plan on having plenty". Part of the planning process includes contingency planning - "what do I do if this or that happens? How do I stay on course in case of a problem?" But planning is not part of the poverty spirit.

Ignore the Needy

He who has pity on the poor lends to the LORD, and He will pay back what he has given. (Proverbs 19:17 NKJV)

He who oppresses the poor to increase his riches, and he who gives to the rich, will surely come to poverty. (Proverbs 22:16 NKJV)

The word translated as "pity" means more than just a simple shaking of the head, with a quietly spoken "tsk-tsk". It carries with it a picture of someone stooping or kneeling in front of someone to show them kindness, and to bestow upon them benevolence and favor. Some people have decided they are unable to stoop so low.

Oppressing the poor is attacking them, bruising them, keeping a strong hand over them to keep them in a subservient position. Giving to the rich for special favors will cause a person to end up with a bank full of nothing.

Unfaithful, Undependable

Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a bad tooth and a foot out of joint. (Proverbs 25:19 NKJV)

Those under the thumb of the poverty spirit don't have the slightest idea what it means to be dependable. They are hardly ever on time, they arrive unprepared, and when called upon to help they are either disengaged with the present situation, or they have something more important to tend to. Commitment is never about them, though they do expect it of others.

Undisciplined

Hear, my son, and be wise; and guide your heart in the way. Do not mix with winebibbers, or with gluttonous eaters of meat; for the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, and drowsiness will clothe a man with rags (Proverbs 23:19 - 23:21 NKJV)

"Guide your heart in the way"; purposefully, intentionally, go a certain route. Most people can start off well, but the poverty spirit gives up too quickly. After all, it's much easier to go with the flow of things than to fight one's way upstream. Giving in to cravings is something anyone can do; but the undisciplined do it better than anyone. And they have great looking rags to show for it.

Fantasy Chaser

He who tills his land will have plenty of bread, but he who follows frivolity will have poverty enough! A faithful man will abound with blessings, but he who hastens to be rich will not go unpunished. (Proverbs 28:19 - 28:20 NKJV)

The spirit of poverty knows nothing about tilling its own land. It has no regard or desire for work. In fact, whenever the poverty spirit is involved with anything that even just slightly resembles work, it's always looking over into the next field, or into some other enterprise. Work smart, not hard, it loves to say - but seldom does either. Too many things catch its eye; too many opportunities to make a fast buck, get a quick thrill, and spice up one's dull life. But punishment and poverty is its lasting legacy.

Bad Eyes

A man with an evil eye hastens after riches, and does not consider that poverty will come upon him. (Proverbs 28:22 NKJV)

He who has a generous eye will be blessed, for he gives of his bread to the poor. (Proverbs 22:9 NKJV)

"Evil eye" means "bad eye", or a "spoiled, good for nothing" eye. An eye that can't see correctly, blinded from the things that make for a rich, enjoyable, productive life. The evil eye can't see other's needs, or other's troubles. It can only see to the end of its nose.

Characteristics of the Spirit of Generosity

Praise the LORD! Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who delights greatly in His commandments. His descendants will be mighty on earth; the generation of the upright
will be blessed. Wealth and riches will be in his house, and his righteousness endures forever. Unto the upright there arises light in the darkness; he is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous. A good man deals graciously and lends; he will guide his affairs with discretion. Surely he will never be shaken; the righteous will be in everlasting remembrance. He will not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is steadfast, trusting in the LORD. His heart is established; he will not be afraid, until he sees his desire upon his enemies. He has dispersed abroad, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever; his horn will be exalted with honor. (Psalm 112 NKJV)

The person who fears the Lord, who delights in his word and his works, will find himself right in the center of his blessing and favor. The ones who open their heart to the Lord's wants and needs, yes, needs, will discover a life free from the spirit of poverty.

Generosity breaks poverty's stronghold. Generosity can see as far as God can see, for it touches and is touched by the heart of God. Generosity will stoop as low as necessary to lift someone God loves. Generosity will climb as high as required, in order to rescue those out on a limb, calling for help. Generosity is "open-handed"; quick to give and able to receive.

Here are some characteristics and scriptures.

Trusting

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and depart from evil. It will be health to your flesh, and strength to your bones. Honor the LORD with your possessions, and with the first fruits of all your increase; so your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine. (Proverbs 3:5 - 3:10 NKJV)

Trust is synonymous with faith. Believe the Lord with all your heart, the scripture reads. Don't lean or rely on what you understand to be true. Acknowledge the Lord's right to tell you which direction to take, and he'll lead so you can follow. I believe most people understand that point. But the scripture wasn't written so we'd have a nice cliché to quote. Solomon was explaining to his kids the reason for trusting God with the whole heart. Why? Because anything less than the whole heart will lead to breakdowns, confusion, poverty and death.

That's why he wrote some examples for us. For instance: honor the Lord with what you have and what you get. When you do, even when it doesn't make sense, the Lord will fill your storehouses and increase your productivity and efficiency.

Taking care of God's storehouse releases God's favor and blessing to take care of ours! Making his concerns our concerns touches his heart and opens his hand. Obeying his word and direction is, primarily, the way to honor him.

Industrious

Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches. Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let

us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith. (Galatians 6 - 6:10 NKJV)

Doing good, sowing, reaping; all these words indicate work of some kind. Sowing to the Spirit is the same as doing good, sharing in all good things with him who teaches, and using the opportunity to do good to all, especially to those who are the household of faith.

The generous spirit is not far from the blessings of God; because it's not far from the heart of God. The generous spirit isn't worried about "payday"; due season is never late.

Faithful

The faithful love of the Lord never ends! His mercies never cease. Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each morning. (Lamentations 3:22 - 3:23 NLT)

Faithful is the key. Faithful never ends. Faithful can't quit or it wouldn't remain faithful. This is within the heart of those motivated by the spirit of generosity. Faithful.

Giving

There is one who scatters, yet increases more; and there is one who withholds more than is right, but it leads to poverty. The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself. The people will curse him who withholds grain, but blessing will be on the head of him who sells it. He who earnestly seeks good finds favor, but trouble will come to him who seeks evil. He who trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish like foliage. (Proverbs 11:24 - 11:28 NKJV)

The generous spirit is actively engaged in helping others. "Scatters" means to spread out, broadcast, and things of that nature. It indicates someone who can't seem to empty his grain bins; the more he gives and scatters, the faster and greater the grain piles back up in his bins.

The generous soul shall be made rich. Does God really mean that? Yes! Rich is having more than enough for my needs and those who ask. The generous soul is the soul who relies upon the Lord. The soul who allows God's sufficiency to flow through them.

Understands Seedtime and Harvest

While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease. (Genesis 8:22 ESV)

"Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you." (Luke 6:38 ESV)

It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. (2 Timothy 2:6 ESV)
For God is the one who provides seed for the farmer and then bread to eat. In the same way, he will provide and increase your resources and then produce a great harvest of generosity in you. (2 Corinthians 9:10 NLT)

The law of seed time and harvest: what you plant, you reap. The degree in which you plant determines the degree in which you harvest.

The one who understands seedtime and harvest also knows the difference between seed and bread. Seed is a thing that is planted, given away. Bread is something to eat. The generous spirit doesn't eat the seed or plant the bread. They know what to give away and what to keep.

The generous spirit understands these principles. However the spirit of poverty has never embraced these truths and hides them from its slaves.

Good Eyes

Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all

things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life. (1 Timothy 6:17 - 6:19 NKJV)

As mentioned previously, someone with "good eyes" is someone possessing the spirit of generosity.

He who has a generous eye will be blessed, for he gives of his bread to the poor. (Proverbs 22:9 NKJV)

The soul who trusts in God is free to distribute gifts, money, time, and help; in fact, everything they have and are. Their trust isn't in their things. Generosity is a good foundation for the time to come.

Concerning the time to come: it's my opinion the word of God indicates there will be terrible times in the last days. I believe those days are fast approaching. I'm not referring to the Great Tribulation, per se. I'm considering the passage Paul wrote in his second letter to Timothy, chapter three.

But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away. (2 Timothy 3:1 - 3:5 NKJV)

Perilous, hard to deal with, pressurized, boiling over, grave, grievous, hazardous, menacing, dangerous, risky, threatening, unhealthy, unsafe... get the idea?

The Lord also mentioned something about our day and age:

Sin will be rampant everywhere, and the love of many will grow cold. (24:12 NLT)

Generosity, love for people, and the love of God partner together. They're like the three-fold cord that can't be broken. On the other hand, selfishness, love of self and love for what other people have don't work together - because it isn't possible. The spirit of the age will produce (and is producing) selfishness, dependency on man rather than God, and every evil work.

This is why Paul said, "that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come." A foundation that will not crumble, even in the midst of financial storms, political upheaval, and societal demise.

How good are your eyes?

Accusations, Deceptions, and Compromise

Do you always feel God's presence? Is it always clear that God is near? For me, the answer is no. The word of God tells me that he'll never leave me or forsake me, but I don't always feel like it's true.

The same is true where evil spirits are concerned. They don't always announce their arrival. In fact, more times than not they just sneak up on us as a thief tiptoeing around a house at night, looking for an opening.

This is how the spirit of poverty operates. Using Accusations, Deceptions, and Compromise as the main calling cards, its sales pitch opens the door for it to sell a product. Accusations, Deceptions, and Compromise represent and promote a large company, with many different products to choose from. But regardless of how the product is portrayed, it never delivers as promised. Never.

Accusations

Charges and indictments. The devil is called "the accuser of the brethren".

Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. (Revelation 12:10 NKJV)

There is nothing that states an accusation, charge, or an indictment must be true. Where the devil is concerned, the charge will definitely *not* be true, entirely. There is usually just enough truth to make the offer sound convincing.

For example: today, as I am writing this chapter, the lottery jackpot is $247 million. That is a huge chunk of change in anyone's mind. The accuser sneaks up on you, whispering a beautiful thought in your ear. "With all that money, you could bless a lot of people!" Then the accusation comes. "You never have been a good provider for your family. You are such a failure. Look where you live. And the car you drive. What a dope you are! Most people your age have a lot more money in the bank. Most people your age don't have to make a house payment each month. No, you'll never amount to anything. You're parents were right. What a feeble minded idiot."

By the time you realize what's happened, you've blown a $50 bill on lottery tickets. Or, you are so depressed you "bless" your family with your sullen disposition. Why? Because the accuser sold you a line.

It can happen a number of different ways, using a number of different scenarios. You see yourself, or think of yourself as a financial flop. Or you hear about a great "deal", but you aren't sure if you really should jump in financially. There's a check in your spirit, something inside making you wonder if it's the right move to make. But the accuser is so thoughtful; and you begin having thoughts that goad you into making the plunge.

"What are you afraid of, you idiot? Why can't you be like Brother Got Rocks? He's using a similar business model, and look how he's prospered. What do you mean, it will take too much of your time? You're just lazy. A lazy slob."

"You can't afford to give to that cause. You're on a limited, fixed income. You can't do anything productive, because you don't have any skills. You're just trying to show off anyway. Your pride is pushing you to give that $100. What a sap! You give away all your money and you'll soon be standing in a soup line."

Accusations have a way of draining us of energy; spiritual, emotional, and physical. We entertain the thoughts, then use our time and resources to prove to ourselves and God that we don't really believe the accusations. We become, as James says, "unstable in all our ways."

It would serve us well to remember one *huge* truth. We have an Advocate to fight our case for us. Jesus Christ the Righteous; our Defense attorney who has never lost a case.

We overcome the accuser by the blood of the Lamb, the word of our testimony, and we love not our life to the death. Or, as the New Living Translation reads:

And they have defeated him by the blood of the Lamb and by their testimony. And they did not love their lives so much that they were afraid to die. (Revelation 12:11 NLT)

When Jesus faced the tempter, the root of poverty, the devil, in the wilderness he had to handle the accusing and doubt filled words thrown at him. It went something like this:

"Jesus, you really think you're something. I don't believe you are who you say or think you are. So, IF you're the son of God, do something easy and prove it. Turn this rock into a loaf of bread." IF was a veiled, but very real accusation.

Three times this happened. But the Father God had already prepared Jesus for the attack. Earlier, Jesus had heard his Father say, "This is my beloved son..." With his thoughts on his Father, Jesus overcame the root of poverty's trap.

As a child of God, and a joint heir with Jesus, we have to handle similar accusations. This is also true in the area of finances.

"You're a child of God? You don't dress like one, or live like one. You say you're a king's kid? Ha! More like a pauper's kid, if you ask me. You don't give to missions, you barely tithe, and each time there's a special offering you get up and go to the restroom because you're too embarrassed to pass the offering plate. And you call yourself a child of God?"

It isn't easy, but scripture tells us to "bring every thought into captivity...". And unless we do what it says, we will never stop the accuser, the author and root of poverty, from running throughout our lives; stealing, killing, and destroying.

Here's a suggestion, based on scripture, that may help you control your thoughts. It's virtually impossible to think about more than one thing at the same time. An exercise I learned long ago will demonstrate my point. Try counting to yourself, in your mind, from 1 to 50. Go ahead, start. Now say your name out loud. What happened to your counting? It had to stop and listen to your mouth, didn't it?

The scriptures tell us what to think about.

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy – meditate on these things. (Philippians 4:8 NKJV)

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. (Colossians 3:1 - 3:4 NKJV)

So when the root of poverty comes around with his insinuations and accusations, change the subject. What has God already done for you? Say it out loud! What has he promised you? Say it out loud!

Protecting your mind helps guard your heart. Determine which things you'll think about and you'll decide what you'll believe and *who* you'll believe.

Deceptions

Dishonest and fraudulent. Cunning and full of guile. A deceiver is able to peddle a lie as if it's the truth. And they can twist the truth and make it appear as a lie. They will use whatever props, gimmicks, voice inflections, or suggestive remarks are needed to close a sale. The devil, the root of evil, the root of poverty, is such a deceiver.

Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. (Genesis 3:1 NKJV)

But I fear that somehow your pure and undivided devotion to Christ will be corrupted, just as Eve was deceived by the cunning ways of the serpent. (2 Corinthians 11:3 NLT)

Deceptions are planned attacks, calculated schemes. They don't just happen. The serpent was waiting for the right opening; planning its speech, rehearsing its presentation.

It happens with you and I much the same way. There are things within or around each of us the enemy will use as props. Broken dreams, or a broken down car; an unexpected bill, or an unprotected heart. Things which support his calm, but cold and calculated questions. Questions like, "Are you sure *that's* what God said? If he *really* meant that, you wouldn't *feel* like you do."

The feelings may be true, but they weren't designed to be a "truth-o-meter." They are more like a barometer than a thermometer. The barometer will indicate changes in barometric pressure that are associated with possible

changes in weather patterns. But it won't tell you the temperature. Truth, God's word, is the thermometer. In fact, God's word is like a "Baro-thermo-meter"; as it can alert the reader to changes in the "weather" and what's happening at that very moment.

The deceiver operates under cover of darkness, as in the absence of truth. Truth is light, and when allowed to shine on the words of the deceiver, they'll reveal the way of escape to freedom.

In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.(John 1:4 - 1:5 NKJV)

Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life. (John 8:12 NKJV)

The entrance of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple. (Psalm 119:130 NKJV)

The battleground of reason is one of the devil's favorite places to engage in deception. When we rely simply on our own understanding; whether that understanding is derived from our five physical senses, our experiences, or our education, we ignore the very thing that can keep us from being deceived. Truth.

"But man was given a brain and he ought to use it", some will say. Absolutely.

Reasoning is great mental exercise. Mental exercises are good for the mind. But reasoning which omits God's input is wide open for deception. And whether the subject deals with finances, eternal security, or reincarnation; without Truth there will be no anchor. The mind will be blown about by every wind of doctrine, and by the trickery of man. See Ephesians 4:14.

Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that

they reasoned thus within themselves, He said to them, "Why do you reason about these things in your hearts." (Mark 2:7 - 2:8 NKJV)

The baptism of John – where was it from? From heaven or from men?" And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?'" (Matthew 21:25 NKJV)

Reasoning without God, in the above examples, kept the people from learning powerful truths from the Son of God. In Matthew's example, the Pharisees wanted to know who gave Jesus the authority to minister like he did. He responded, "You answer a question for me, and I'll answer yours. The baptism of John..." But they REASONED among themselves...and Jesus never answered in a way that could open their eyes.

Reasoning without God actually acts like a steel door on the heart. Yes, it guards everything, but also keeps light from entering in. What a waste.

Concerning the spirit of poverty, the devil enjoys getting us so focused on what the stock brokers tell us, what the gas prices say, and "why is that preacher always talking about money?!" Reasoning. Robbing.

God invites us to reason *with* him.

Come now, and let us reason together," says the LORD, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land. (Isaiah 1:18 -1:19 NKJV)

"Let us reason *together*...". Reasoning without God about our sins is fruitless; a waste of time. First off, what sins? That's how we'd react. We may have a few things that are kind of "iffy", but certainly nothing that could be classified as sin. Reasoning about ourselves, by ourselves, leaves a lot of room for error. We will most likely judge ourselves as not too bad, or much worse than we really are. We just don't do so well on our own. So easily deceived.

Deceptions.

The root of poverty also employs the use of self-pity, when planning his deceptive dealings. One that's used many, many times is the one that goes like this. Maybe you've heard it:

"How come God never blesses me? Why do I have to scrimp and scrape for every penny, when other Christians seem to live under the spout where the glory pours out? Why am I having so many testings and trials? It isn't fair! I thought Jesus came to give me abundant life. If this is living, I'd sure hate to find out what dying is."

Sound familiar?

But truth has something to say, if we'll listen.

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. (1 Peter 5:8 - 5:9 NKJV)

I'll paraphrase Peter's words. "Wise up, Rise up, and Shut up! You aren't the only one who's ever had to deal with stuff, buddy."

Compromise

Compromise acts like a magnet. It invites, attracts, the spirit of poverty and his friends into the situation we're dealing with. It opens a proverbial "Pandora's Box", unleashing accusations, deceptions, discouragement, and a whole host of wickedness we are unprepared to battle.

Compromise may work in a family setting, or in politics, and maybe on the job. But no one can compromise with the root of poverty and come out ahead. Give an inch, and lose a mile. That's what will happen when we decide to compromise.

How does the option of compromise come up? It typically shows up when our patience is feeling overwhelmed. After we have set out to believe God and his word.

For a few days or moments, our faith and patience does fine. It's all smiles and hallelujahs. It just knows God has heard our prayers and sees our need. But after a few days, it's like maybe God forgot about us.

We just knew plan A was going to work. Plan A is believe God to do what he promised. Continue to work at the thing we know he gave us to do and trust him to provide for the need.

But that was before. Now God is on the other side of the world, helping out someone working in a rice paddy. So, on to plan B; which is to quit doing exactly what he told us to do.

Sometimes we feel pressure from the world, the flesh, and the devil whenever we are trying to stand for the principles of God. People may speak ill of us, family members may not understand us, and even sickness and disease can attack us; trying to discourage us and get us to quit the fight.

And if we're not mindful of the enemy's tricks, we'll back down, little by little. Yes, it may ease the "pain" for a season; but like I mentioned earlier, no one wins with compromise. No one.

For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, my soul has no pleasure in him.“ But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul. Hebrews 10:37 - 10:39 NKJV)

There's only one way to beat the spirit of compromise. Don't draw back, don't give in, and don't compromise. STAND.

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the

wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.(Ephesians 6:10 - 6:13 NKJV)

Submit to God (even if it doesn't make any sense), resist the devil, and he flees!

Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. (James 4:7 NKJV)

How long must we resist? Until he flees. Until the cows come home, if necessary.

Breaking Free

There is a simple yet powerful principle in the word of God that is often ignored.

The principle? "Do the opposite of what you're being *driven* to do."

Why do people ignore it? Because many times they would rather not have to be responsible for their own freedom. If God would just answer their prayers quickly and make everything right in their life, they could keep doing and living like always.

Of course God sets people free. Of course evil spirits are cast out in Jesus' Name. Absolutely.

But the power of the poverty spirit is most effectively broken, and freedom sustained, by recognizing the spirit's characteristics and influence; and then doing the opposite.

Don’t let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good (Romans 12:21 NLT).

For example, Jesus had a rich young ruler approach him one day. I believe the rich man was greatly influenced by the spirit of poverty. Read back through the list of characteristics and see for yourself.

Now a certain ruler asked Him, saying, “Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” So Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. “You know the commandments: ’Do not commit adultery,’ ‘Do not murder,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not bear false witness,’ ’Honor your father and your mother.' And he said, “All these things I have kept from my youth.” So when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, “You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.” But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich. (Luke 18:18 - 18:24 NKJV)

Jesus explained that is was very hard for those who *trust* in their riches to enter the Kingdom of God (Mark 10:24). The Lord was attempting to free the young man from the enslaving spirit of poverty. But he couldn't look past his own wants and desires. He must not have known or remembered Proverbs 19:17.

He who has pity on the poor lends to the LORD, and He will pay back what he has given. (Proverbs 19:17 NKJV)

Freedom to give, to live, to be actively involved in God's work without the trappings of selfishness and greed is worth more than any one can imagine. It has to be experienced.

I encourage you to go after God and be not wise in your own eyes. Fear the Lord and depart from evil, honoring him with your first fruits and all your increase. Wow, are you in for an exciting life!

Living Above Your Income - But Not Beyond Your Means

God is our "means", our source. At least he should be. He doesn't want us to be dependent upon our job, social security, retirement checks, or anything other than him. But that doesn't mean we're to do nothing but sit and "trust" the Lord to send us a raven with a beak full of bread.

...nor give place to the devil. Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. (Ephesians 4:27 - 4:28 NKJV)

Here are a couple of things to take note of. First of all, "nor give place to the devil." A very clear directive, right? Look at the words again. Read it this way: "giving; no place for the devil." Of course, I took my liberty of moving some of the words but did you see the message? Do you understand the devil is *not* a giver? He is a *thief* and a *robber*. And one very practical way to keep him from getting a foothold in your life is to be a *giver*.

Okay, the second point is this: in order to live above your income there needs to be a change in your head and heart. Paul didn't tell us to work so we can pay the bills, buy a boat, make a car payment, or anything like that. He told us to be industrious, productive, to work and not be lazy, so we'd have something to *give* to whoever had a need. You might want to read that again.

Work so we'd have something to give.

Paul, good apostle that he was, practiced what he preached. Check this out:

So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. (Acts 20:32 - 20:34 NKJV)

Paul was speaking to the Ephesian elders. Notice he worked so he would have something to give to those who were in need. God supplied Paul's needs according to God's riches in glory. And God supplied what the other's needed according to his riches in glory.

Do you see it? Since God is not a counterfeiter, his riches in glory include people like you and I. He works in and through people who have a kindred heart with him. He is our wealth, and we are his.

Amazing.

God can be trusted.

One of the most often "used" scriptures is Philippians 4:19. Coming in a close second would be Philippians 4:13. Let's look at those in context.

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress. Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities. Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account. Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:13 - 4:19 NKJV)

Paul stated, "I can do all things..." after he'd written about his learning how to be content. His commendation to the Philippians who had given sacrificially to him then stirred him to say, "and my God will supply all *your* need..."

In other words, the Philippians were generous to the point of sacrifice. They didn't just give their leftovers. They gave beyond their abundance. They gave to the point of sacrificial giving. And the promise of God, given through the apostle Paul, was their "right now word" of victory.

Let's Wrap This Up

Poverty is not God's will! Generosity breaks the curse, the spirit of poverty.

And...the generational curse of poverty can and *must* be broken.

Generational curse? Yes. As in a curse that is perpetuated because one generation models a certain type of lifestyle and behavior to the next. Fathers and mothers on welfare, able-bodied but lazy, model such a way of living to their children, who, in turn, do the same.

But we've already looked at what can be done to break that curse. Now we just need to do it.

It begins with faith. It requires obedience.

"Come now, and let us reason together," says the LORD, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured by the sword"; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken. (Isaiah 1:18 - 1:20 NKJV)

The Lord gives the invitation, and explains the proposal. He's not afraid to offer his best to us, though we are his "worst". He can take care of our worst; in fact he has already done that through his Son Jesus Christ.

And really, who doesn't want what God is offering? No one in their right mind would turn down the offer of a lifetime. I would go so far as to say *everyone* is willing to "eat the good of the land." *Everyone*, deep down inside, wants the blessing of God.

The blessing of the Lord makes a person rich, and he adds no sorrow with it. (Proverbs 10:22 NLT)

Yes, everyone is willing but not everyone is *obedient*. But obedience only hurts for a season.

The pain of obedience gives way to the fruit of obedience. And that is worth the pain.

And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work. As it is written: "He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever." Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness. (2 Corinthians 9:8 - 9:10 NKJV)

The fruit of obedience includes freedom from the spirit of poverty.

Have you recognized the spirit of poverty in your life? Are you willing to endure the pain of obedience in order to experience its fruit?

If so, your next move is to pray: "Father, I humble myself before you. I confess Jesus as the Lord of my life; now and forever. I believe he died for my sin and rose from the grave for my salvation. Thank you for making me a new creation in Christ. Lord, I ask you to set me free from the spirit of poverty. Open the eyes of my understanding to see how you would have me live. Help me to trust you with my whole life; including my social and financial life. May the spirit of generosity grow within my heart so I may increasingly reveal your love and character to my world. Thank you, Lord! I receive your help and give you praise, in Jesus' Name."

Now, it's time to live!

For more books and articles by Jan Grace, please visit his site at http://jangrace.com