

# **SPIRITUAL FITNESS – GIVING**

*(1 Chronicles 29.10-17 and Matthew 6.1-6, 19-21)*

Why the title Spiritual Fitness on Gift Day, when we are raising funds for the new church heating?

There is a connection between spiritual fitness and money.

The world thinks a lot about money and possessions. The Bible says a lot about money and possessions.

“Don’t covet... The love of money... Eye of a needle...

See for example, Hebrews 13.5...Matthew 6.19, 21 and James 5.1-5.

Money is a touchstone of the genuineness of our commitment to God;  
The wallet is the last part of us to be converted!

John Wesley earned £30 a year and gave away £3.

There is nothing wrong with money in itself; it is a good servant, but a bad master.

Here’s a brief and highly selective history of money and possessions:

1<sup>st</sup> emperor Augustus turned Rome from brick to marble; later Nero lived for luxury; Petronius (1<sup>st</sup> century AD novelist) said “nothing satisfies anyone”.

We talk of “Keeping up with the Jones’s”; Think of Flanders & Swann’s song about one-upmanship.

“Access [now Mastercard] had a slogan “takes the waiting out of wanting.”

My son Robin had a friend who lost lots of money and committed suicide. The media focus on gaining money; lottery winners; WAGs; the Russian lady: haute couture (in Sunday Times magazine Feb 2018).

Contrast this with Augustine and the thought that we have a God-shaped hole;

Monastic vows are of *poverty*, chastity and obedience. There's a lovely story about a Scottish host who said "If you need anything, call me, and I'll show you how to do without it"!

Matthew 6: what does it say?

- Don't show off about your giving (2-4), or praying (5-6), or fasting (16-18).
- Set your heart on heavenly riches (19); your treasure is what your heart is full of (21)

What about 1 Chronicles 29?

- Offer willingly (5) because God loves a cheerful giver (see 2 Cor 9.7, noting the whole verse).
- Offer ourselves (5) (see Romans 12.1)
- Offer with a whole heart (9)
- Everything belongs to/comes from God (11 and 14b)
- If we have riches, honour, greatness, strength, it all comes from him in the first place
- Be humble (14): even our giving is because he enables us
- Earth is not our permanent home (15)
- *Enjoy giving!* (17)

So where do we stand?

How do we react when...

Test 1: you get a £100 tax rebate...

Test 2: your son or niece becomes a Christian or gets into Oxford or promoted at work...

Insidious dangers – are we trying to hoard what God has entrusted to us, and not realising it?!

Therefore do not store up treasures on earth... Where you treasure is... all things come from you...