

“The Economy of Kingly Grace”
Deuteronomy 14:22-29
December 10, 2023
Faith Presbyterian Church – Morning Service
Pastor Nicoletti

The Reading of the Word

We continue our series this morning in the book of Deuteronomy, as Moses instructs the people of Israel, on the verge of the promised land, as we turn now to Deuteronomy 14:22-29.

Please do listen carefully, for this is God’s word for us this morning.

Moses said to the people:

^{14:22} “You shall tithe all the yield of your seed that comes from the field year by year. ²³ And before Yahweh your God, in the place that he will choose, to make his name dwell there, you shall eat the tithe of your grain, of your wine, and of your oil, and the firstborn of your herd and flock, that you may learn to fear Yahweh your God always. ²⁴ And if the way is too long for you, so that you are not able to carry the tithe, when Yahweh your God blesses you, because the place is too far from you, which Yahweh your God chooses, to set his name there, ²⁵ then you shall turn it into money and bind up the money in your hand and go to the place that Yahweh your God chooses ²⁶ and spend the money for whatever you desire—oxen or sheep or wine or strong drink, whatever your appetite craves. And you shall eat there before Yahweh your God and rejoice, you and your household. ²⁷ And you shall not neglect the Levite who is within your towns, for he has no portion or inheritance with you.

²⁸ “At the end of every three years you shall bring out all the tithe of your produce in the same year and lay it up within your towns. ²⁹ And the Levite, because he has no portion or inheritance with you, and the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, who are within your towns, shall come and eat and be filled, that Yahweh your God may bless you in all the work of your hands that you do.

This is the Word of the Lord. (Thanks be to God.)

“All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord endures forever.” [1 Peter 1:24-25]

Let’s pray ...

Prayer of Illumination

Lord, how can we keep our way pure?
By guarding it according to your Word.
Help us now to seek you with our whole hearts.
Keep us from wandering from your commandments.
Let us store up your word in our hearts,

so that we might not turn from you.
In Jesus's name we pray. Amen.
[Based on Psalm 119:9-11]

Introduction

Our text this morning is about tithing.

Tithing is the biblical call on God's people to give ten percent of their income to the Lord. It's everyone's favorite sermon topic.

Now, let me give two disclaimers before we dive in.

First ... if you're visiting this morning, or you've only been with us a few times ... this is not a topic we talk about often. Really. Ask around. We preach through whole books of the Bible, and the sermons are on whatever the text is on. And this text is on giving from our income to the Lord. That's what the tithe is. So that's what we're going to talk about. And just so you know: I'm not paid on commission. My salary is not linked to giving levels. So though we'll talk about my salary in a few minutes, even if this sermon leads to people just giving money to the church like crazy, that would not increase my salary.

Second, for our members and regular attenders, I'll just remind you that I have no clue what any of you give. That information is not given to me. So as I speak on this topic, I don't have you in mind specifically – whether you give a lot or a little. Because I don't know. I'm simply applying in general what the Lord calls us to here in this text.

And this is an interesting text to do that ... because this text focuses on what tithing is for. And maybe to our surprise, tithing in this passage leads to a party. Which is maybe not what we would expect.

But it should pique our curiosity.

What we see in this text is a sort of economics. And this morning I want to consider first the foundation of that economics, and then the economies it leads to in the Christian life.

The Economics of Kingly Grace

So first, let's consider the foundational economics that's described here.

At root, this passage describes what I'm going to call an economics of kingly grace.

An economics of kingly grace.

Let's start with the "kingly" part.

It's important to recognize in what capacity the Lord calls us to present him with the tithe. Because ... though we may not articulate it, we far too often fall into modern categories of thinking when it comes to the tithe.

First, we tend to think of it less in terms of what we give to God, and more in terms of what we give to earthly ministries – less as an offering to the Lord and more as something paid to human workers.

And then, once we've done that, we can treat it in a way that's analogous to other human organizations we might give money to.

So some of us can fall into thinking of it like a subscription service. Trying out a new church is sort of like trying out a new app or streaming service. You start off with the free version ... and then maybe if you especially like it, you might decide to switch to the paid version ... but even then, if you like it but don't love it you might choose to pay at the "plus" version rate, but not the "premium" level. Or ... maybe you just decide to stay on the non-payment plan. It may be true that each time the plate passes you feel a pang of guilt ... but it's kind of like listening to an ad before the next song ... you can tolerate the discomfort if it means keeping more of your hard-earned money for other things.

Or maybe you think of it less like a subscription and more like an extra-spiritual option. Giving, from this point of view, is a good thing, but it's never expected. It's always above and beyond what anyone should expect of you. So when you do give even a small amount to the church or to another ministry, you feel like you've racked up some spiritual bonus points for the week. But you're confident that no one should expect you to give.

Or maybe, if you have a deeper sense of duty, you don't see giving as optional. It's a requirement ... but it's one you kind of resent (if you're honest). Seeing your tithe go out of your bank account gives you a similar feeling as seeing your income taxes deducted from your paycheck ... it annoys you ... you wonder what it's even going towards ... but you know you don't want to get in trouble with any "higher powers" ... so you endure it. But it doesn't quite feel fair to you.

A subscription ... an option ... a tax. That can be how we view the biblical call to give to the Lord ten percent of our income.

But that's not how the Bible views it. If there's an earthly analogy that fits well with the Bible's view of the tithe, it's the analogy of tribute given to a king.

Now as Americans we're not huge fans of kings. But that's too bad. Because the Bible consistently tells us that God is a king. He's king of the universe.

In the Old Testament, God brought that truth out by emphasizing that he was the King of Israel. And as King, everything belonged to him. The land was his, and so the produce of the land was his. The people also were his, and so everything they produced was his. This is an old-school view of kingship, and while we might have reason to protest when a mere mortal makes such absolute claims, we have no right to protest when God does. Because all things really do belong to him. He made the land. He made the seed. He made the livestock. He made all the raw materials we might

work with. He made us. He made our intelligence. He made our strength. He made it all, and he owns it all. And so everything we produce rightly belongs to him – it comes from him and through the gifts he’s given us. The Apostle Paul puts it simply: “What do you have that you did not receive?” [1 Corinthians 4:7] The answer, of course, is nothing.

God, as King, has a rightful claim on everything. And so, in Leviticus 27:30, when the tithe is spoken of ... God doesn’t request the tithe ... he doesn’t suggest it ... he doesn’t offer it as an option to be extra spiritual. He makes it clear that it already belongs to him. Moses says: “Every tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the trees, is Yahweh’s; it is holy to Yahweh.”

It may be true that we give the tithe to human stewards (we’ll say more about that in a moment) – but ultimately the tithe is given to God, because it already is his by right.

That’s the “kingly” aspect when we speak of an “economics of kingly grace.”

But what about the “grace” part?

Well, to put it frankly, the “grace” part begins with the fact that though God owns everything ... even so ... he still lets us keep 90% of what we produce.

That is grace. Because he has a right to all of it.

To modern people, who assume a right to the possessions we have – who assume we are entitled to the things we receive or the things we produce – the shock of tithing is that even God himself would claim 10% of our income from us.

But from the Bible’s perspective, the shock is that God, who has a right to everything (including us!), would let us keep 90% of what we produce in our lives.

Take a moment and reflect on that.

God’s provision to us is so gracious that straight off the bat he gives us 90%, though it’s all rightfully his. With our sinful hearts we so often treat the 10% as an imposition. We skip over the 90% that is a gift to us from our King.

That is where a biblical understanding of the tithe begins – it begins by recognizing, from the start, that what is at work in the tithe is an economics of kingly grace.

But that grace doesn’t stop there. Because it continues with what God then does with the tithe – something which our text this morning focuses on.

We see here in Deuteronomy 14, along with Leviticus 27 and Numbers 18, how God uses the tithe. And in how God uses the tithe we learn about how our tithes are to be used today ... and with that, we see a model for our own lives and a window into God’s heart.

So with that in mind, as we consider God's economics of kingly grace, we see three economic elements at work in this text. We see:

- An economy of charity.
- An economy of ministry. And,
- An economy of festivity.

An economy of charity, an economy of ministry, and an economy of festivity.

Let's consider each.

An Economy of Charity

First, we see here an economy of charity.

This comes up in two ways.

The first is that it's implied in the tithe feast described in verses 22 through 27. God's people are to bring their tithe to the house of God each year and to hold a feast, which took place at the Feast of Booths. But the annual feasts described in the Bible are times for all of God's people to gather – not just the wealthy, but also the poor. And so the implication is that the widow, the orphan, and others in need, would also come to this feast, and then be invited to the tables of those who had something to give. And so, in this annual tithe feast, charity would be fundamental to the gathering of all God's people together.

But then, second, we see a more common day-to-day system of charity here as well. This is described in verses twenty-eight and twenty-nine. Each year, a faithful Israelite would give 10% of their land's production to the Lord. Two out of three years they would bring it to the tabernacle as described in verses 22 to 27. But one out of every three years they would bring it to a storehouse that would be set up in their towns, and deposit it there. And then from there it would be distributed over the course of the year to those in need – including “the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow.”

We're not told the details of how this would be managed, but Daniel Block points out that there may have been a rotating system, so that each year one third of the residents deposited their tithe in the town storehouse for the needy, while the rest brought it to Jerusalem. This would provide for the needy every year in the towns [Block, 359], and those who brought their tithe to Jerusalem each year could serve as hosts, providing the feast for those who had brought their tithe to the town storehouse that year as well. Christopher Wright points out that all of this also implies an administrative system – not just to coordinate who gives where when, but much more than that, someone in each town had to be in charge of the administrative task of distributing the grain that was stored there, over the course of the year. [Wright, 184]

In all this we see that God establishes an economy of charity with the tithe – providing for those in need both at the feast and throughout the year.

And he continues to call the Church to that today.

We see that carried out, especially in our diaconal ministry. We take a deacons' offering each month, and those funds are entrusted to the deacons, who then do the work of making decisions about how to distribute those resources to those in need. Some of it goes to those in need within our congregation – just as Israel was called on to provide for the Israelite fatherless and widow. Some goes to those outside our church, just as Israel was called on in verse twenty-nine to provide for the non-Israelite sojourner.

We give to those in need directly. But we also fulfill this calling by giving to other ministries that care for those in need. We contribute from what we receive to ministries like Tacoma Rescue Mission, and the houses of Naomi Ruth and Boaz – ministries providing direct charitable care for those in need here in Tacoma.

In these ways, we seek to use the tithe that we receive here at Faith towards an economy of charity, as the Lord calls us to.

This is one way the Lord uses the tithe.

But this economy of charity is not limited to the tithe or to the institutional church. Rather, it's a model for Christians for every aspect of our lives.

In the gleaning laws of Israel [Leviticus 19:9-10; 23:22], and the Sabbatical year requirements [Deuteronomy 15], and the Year of Jubilee [Leviticus 25:10-13], we see that charity was also to be built into the structure of Israel's economy: charity towards the poor was required to be part of their production process, their loan system, and the land (which was the means of production).

In the Book of Ruth we are reminded how charity towards the needy was also expected to be a key part of family life for God's people.

In the story of Joseph, we see a faithful believer working through the power of the state to gather resources, in order to distribute them to those in need in a time of famine – an act that is characterized in Genesis 45:7 as God's provision.

In the economics of God's kingly grace, charity is not restricted to the institutional Church. It's also to be part of our economic life, our political life, our family life, and our personal lives.

God models for us here, in the distribution of the tithe, how we are to care for those in need in other areas of life.

He also reminds us that in many cases, that care should be personal. In some aspects of caring for the poor, the giving of the average Israelite was mediated by a system that distributed contributions for them – that's implied here in verses 28 and 29. But in other aspects, it meant inviting the needy into our lives – to their personal feast table in Jerusalem. It's a call not just to writing a check, but to personal, face-to-face relationships.

In all this we see the economy of charity that the Lord calls his people to in all of life.

That's the first economy we see at work here.

An Economy of Ministry

The second thing we see in the economics of God's kingly grace is an economy of ministry.

In verse twenty-seven and verse twenty-nine we are reminded that the tithe – whether it was brought to the tabernacle, or stored in each town – was also to be used to support the Levites, and with them the priests.

The priests and Levites were those that the Lord called to serve Israel in vocational ministry. Both at the tabernacle itself, and also as they were spread throughout the land, the priests and Levites were called to provide spiritual instruction and direction for God's people.

What's alluded to here is spelled out in more detail in Numbers 18, that the tithe was also to be used to provide support and an income for the Levites and the priests, so that they were free to do the work of vocational ministry that the Lord had called them to. [Numbers 18:21-32]

And that aspect of the tithe also continues to apply to us today.

The first, and most obvious way this plays out is that the church is called on to financially support its own priests and Levites: ministers and others who are serving the church vocationally.

Now ... two acknowledgements up front:

The first, is that this is a little awkward ... because I'm one of the people here in vocational ministry ... and so we're talking about me, among others.

For that reason, I'm tempted to skip or gloss over this part of the text ... but it is something Christians wonder about sometimes, and so I think I need to say something about it.

The second thing I need to say is that our church does this well. I am provided for here. And nothing I say this morning is a veiled dig or message or plea for more money. So don't hear what I'm not saying. I'm thankful for our church's provision in this area.

The reason this is worth spending a couple minutes on though is that it can be helpful to remind ourselves of the biblical basis in this provision.

As our text alludes to in verse twenty-seven, the priests and Levites of Israel – those in vocational ministry – are expected to give something up economically. And then the people of God are called on to provide for them in light of that.

First, the priests and Levites of Israel were called to give up normal economic provisions that most people relied on in their day.

In ancient Israel – in an agricultural-based economy – this meant that the priests and Levites did not have fields to farm in order to provide for themselves – that’s what verse 27 refers to as an “inheritance.” In our economic system of competitive wages, one thing pastors give up is the market forces that tend to set most other people’s wages. Unlike many other workers in our economy, there’s not a functional market that sets pastoral salaries. Pastors aren’t supposed to change jobs just to boost their compensation. They’re not supposed to seek an offer from one church and use it to leverage a higher salary with their current church. Pastors are rightly called on to give up those kind of market-based approaches to compensation – that’s part of the call to ministry.

And with that, verse 27 reminds Israel in the ancient world, and the Church today, that God’s people are called on to remember that, and to not forget the needs of those who have been called to minister to them, but to provide for them adequately.

I’m thankful that Faith does that. But you should be aware that not all churches do. Over the years I’ve had conversations with multiple ministers ... outside of our church ... who love the church they’re serving at, who want to stay there ... but who can’t provide for their family there – not, in those particular cases, because a church can’t provide a more adequate salary ... but because they choose not to. And the men don’t know what to do. They’re torn. They want to be faithful. But pulled between the needs of their family and the church they’re serving at, they don’t know what faithfulness should look like. And it seems, at least from what I can see, that they are at churches that have fallen short of the exhortations of verses 27 and 29 – churches that have forgotten – that have neglected the priest or the Levite who is serving in their midst.

I’m thankful our church has not forgotten that. And my prayer is that more churches will heed the call of these verses.

That said, this economy of ministry also goes beyond providing for those who minister in the church locally.

And that too is modeled in this text.

An Israelite’s tithe, we see here, was not just going to the local Levites who ministered to them. It was also going to priests and Levites who ministered more broadly in Israel. The funds that were deposited locally every three years in verse 28 would support Levites who were also ministering to others in their region, and the funds brought to the tabernacle the other two out of three years would go, in part, to the priests and fund the ministry system at work to bless all of Israel. And so, this text also calls us to support ministries outside of our own congregation and staff.

And as a church, we do this in a number of ways, as we support a number of ministries from our annual church budget every year.

By my count, from our general fund – so not even including from the deacon’s fund or unexpected requests that come to us throughout the year – from our 2023 budget (from the tithes and offerings that we received here), we provided financial support to over forty different ministries or ministry workers: to four ministry agencies of our denomination, plus fifteen different ministries or ministry workers in the Pacific Northwest that serve beyond our congregation, plus twenty-seven ministries

or ministry workers serving people internationally. In 2023 we budgeted over \$190,000 towards ministries that serve people beyond our own congregation.

But we don't just seek to do that with our budget. We also do that with how we use the other assets we have as a church. We have a building and we're committed to using it to support ministry – including ministries beyond our congregation.

The most obvious example of that is Covenant High School, which is a ministry of this church by which we disciple and provide Christian education for students from our own congregation, as well as many others.

But we also use our building to support other, external Christian ministries. We host CareNet trainings in our building, we host an independent K thru 8 Christian school during the week, we host a ministry that prepares sandwiches for the Tacoma Rescue Mission's search & rescue work, and many other things.

Many church buildings sit empty between Sundays. But we believe we're called to use what the Lord's given us for ministry, and so this building is rarely empty – we're always trying to use it to support Christian ministries both internal and external to our congregation.

In all these ways, the funds of the tithe and the assets of the institutional church are to be used for ministry.

And once again, that's also meant to give us a model for our own lives.

Because as Christians, we don't "check the box" of ministry by simply paying someone else to do it. But beyond the tithe, with the rest of our resources – whether it's our finances, our time, our strength, our gifts, or our abilities – we are called to personally participate in the economy of ministry. That means volunteering in the church. It may mean volunteering to serve in other local ministries. It means ministering organically to one another in Christian friendships. It means sharing Christ with the non-Christians the Lord has placed in our lives.

This priority of ministry in the tithe is to be a model for how we live – a call for each of us to be active participants in ministry ourselves.

That's the second thing we see here: an economy of ministry.

An Economy of Festivity

Third and finally, we see an economy of festivity.

And we see this in verse twenty-five and twenty-six. Listen again to what Moses calls Israel to. He says: "go to the place that Yahweh your God chooses and spend the money for whatever you desire—oxen or sheep or wine or strong drink, whatever your appetite craves. And you shall eat there before Yahweh your God and rejoice, you and your household."

God is calling his people to a party.

And it's a reminder of something we can sometimes forget: Our God is a God who likes parties.

Jesus, after all, was dismissed by some as a glutton and drunkard [Matthew 11:19]. That accusation wasn't true, of course, but it is a window into the kind of gatherings he was known to attend.

Similarly, in multiple places in the Old Testament, God calls his people to feasting and celebration.

As Christians, we are to be a festive people. We are to be a people known for celebration because we have so much to celebrate. And we are to be people who are generous in their festivities – who bring people together in community, who invite those who might often be excluded, who gather around tables and food and celebrate together all the good that the Lord has done for us.

But this call to festivity is not limited to our private lives and homes. What we see here is that this call to festivity is part of the tithe as well. God calls Israel here to feast from the tithe. That's what is going on here.

And as we consider that, we need to recognize the implication of that. We said at the beginning that we see God's incredible generosity in that, though he has a right to all things, he still lets us retain 90% of it, out of his kingly generosity, taking only 10% of it himself.

But here we see that even from the tithe – even from the mere 10% he requires of us – even from that, he then takes what we have given him, and he uses even that, to bless us. That's what was happening when Israel feasted from the tithe.

And it's what God does for us as well.

When our church hosts special gatherings, meals, or congregational events, as well as when we have our more routine gatherings each Lord's Day and each Wednesday evening, what's happening at each of those gatherings is that the Lord, who has received our tithes and offerings, is using them to bless us, to provide for us a place to gather together with his people in celebration. But that's not just true in our gatherings or festivities.

Because also, as you receive ministry from the church that blesses you, whether it's a sermon or a worship service, a meeting with a pastor, assistance from staff, or something else, the Lord, once again, is using our tithes and offerings, which are rightfully his – he's using them to fund staff, and space, and resources to minister to you as a congregant.

On top of that, if you find yourself in financial need, and you come to the deacons, and you receive assistance, then that is, once again, the Lord using offerings given to him in order to bless you.

In each aspect of the use of the tithe we see here: in festivities, in ministry, and in charity, the pattern again and again is that the Lord takes what we offer to him, and he turns around and uses even it to bless us. That is the extent of his kingly grace.

Which means that it's not unspiritual for us to be blessed from the funds that are given to the Lord. Because that's how the Lord often chooses to use what is his.

God is that gracious – not only that he gives us all things, but that even what he calls us to give to him as kingly tribute, he often turns around, and uses to bless us, through the Church's charity, ministry, and festivity.

The Human Stewards

And he does that through human stewards. The deacons with the deacon fund, and the elders with the general fund, are called on to decide how to use the tithes and offerings to do the various things the Lord calls us to.

We can't do everything, of course. And I can tell you that this church's leadership deliberates and agonizes over how to most faithfully use the Lord's funds to reflect his heart for his people. Every year we seek to emphasize charity and outside ministries. Some years more funds are available for festivities. This past year, funds for our gatherings were reduced in order to designate more funds for ministry, by bringing on an additional pastor. Less funds have been available for certain events – something you may have noticed. But at the same time, more pastoral care and counseling has been available for congregants who are struggling and hurting – the sort of private ministry that often goes on unseen by others, but that still impacts people's lives.

Decisions on the details of how to use tithes and offerings are always difficult, and our leaders here feel the weight of that. But in the midst of it all, I can assure you, they are striving to be faithful in using the funds the Lord has entrusted to them to reflect God's heart for charity, ministry, and festivity here at Faith, according to the advice and requests they hear from you, the wisdom the Lord has given them, and the most pressing needs they see among us. It's not an easy task. There are finite funds, and virtually infinite possibilities. We can't do everything. But, at the same time, we can do more when the congregation decides to give more. That part is up to you. And so it is worth considering what you're giving, and what the Lord has called you to give.

Conclusion: A Reflection of God's Heart

Our text this morning gives us concrete things to do. But it also does more than that. Because the economies we see here of charity, ministry, and festivity, are also windows into the heart of God himself – into the heart of the King who institute these practices.

After all, it was Jesus who said, “where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” And if God's use of the tithe is any indication of his heart, then our text also reminds us that God himself is a God of ministry, charity, and festivity.

He's a God of ministry. And he doesn't just send others out in ministry, but he is a God who goes out and does ministry himself. God, in Jesus Christ, is the ultimate priest to us – the ultimate Levite. He came and gave up his rights and advantages, in order to care for us, and shepherd us, and lead us to himself. He is a God of ministry – our Chief Shepherd.

He's also a God of charity. He loves those in need ... which is why he loves us. He doesn't come for those who have it all together, but in Jesus Christ he comes seeking sinners – those who are spiritually impoverished – and he provides for them all they need for eternal life. He is a God of grace and mercy – of love and charity.

And finally, our God is a God of festivity. He is the Lord of history, and he tells us in the Bible that the culmination of history – that what he is working in the world towards – is a great party: the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. When Christ returns, he will gather all who have trusted in him, and he will then host a great feast, at his table. And we will then live with him forever in joy and celebration. Every earthly feast in this life points forward to and longs for that feast that is to come. And that includes the symbolic and sacramental meal we have together every Lord's Day. This meal is meant to be a foretaste – to whet our appetites for the great feast that is to come. Because our God is a God of feasting and festivity.

The God of the Bible is a generous God – he is a God of ministry, a God of charity, and a God of festivity.

He is a King who is worthy of all honor.

And so let us honor him with our finances.

Let us honor him with our lives.

And let us rejoice in the many ways he has blessed us, and in the many blessings that await us, in the feast that is still to come.

Amen.

This sermon draws on material from:

- Alter, Robert. *The Five Books of Moses: A Translation with Commentary*. New York, NY: Norton, 2004.
Barker, Paul. Introduction and notes to Deuteronomy in *The ESV Study Bible*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008.
Block, Daniel I. *The NIV Application Commentary: Deuteronomy*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012.
Theopolis Podcast. Episode 663: “Boiling a Young Goat in its Mother’s Milk (Deuteronomy 14).” With Peter Leithart, Alastair Roberts, and Jeff Meyers. August 9, 2023. <https://soundcloud.com/user-812874628/episode-663-boiling-a-young-goat-in-its-mothers-milk-deut-14>
Wright, Christopher. *Deuteronomy*. NIBC. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996.

Note: In my preaching I often cite and draw from a range of sources, which includes material from Christians within my theological tradition, Christians outside my theological tradition (in keeping with our church's core value of “Reformed Catholicity”), and also (following the Apostle Paul's example in Acts 17) non-Christians who are well outside of Christian orthodoxy and orthopraxy. And so, when I cite an author or a source, that citation should not be understood or construed as me necessarily agreeing with, endorsing, or recommending to others anything else from that author or source, except for what I explicitly say I agree with, endorse, or recommend. When engaging with different materials and thinkers, all Christians must exercise wisdom and discernment to determine what is helpful, appropriate, and edifying for each person, taking into account their current needs, wisdom, and spiritual maturity.