

# *The Gift of Giving*

A STUDY OF CHRISTIAN  
STEWARDSHIP



*Freely you have received, freely give*  
*Matthew 10:18*

*A Four Week Study*  
*Prepared for the*  
*Siwell Road Church of Christ*  
*by Mark Ray*



# The Gift of Giving

## A STUDY OF CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP

### Lesson One: Giving in the Bible

*Many in the Church today do not like to talk about money and giving yet...*

*Money is the most mentioned subject in the word of God.*

From Genesis to Revelation there are 2350 verses that discuss money.  
There are only 500 on prayer and less than 500 on faith.  
Of the 38 parables Jesus taught, 16 of them deal with money or possessions.

*Why did Jesus teach so much about money?*

Because how you handle money will affect your relationship with God.

Luke 16:11 Therefore if you have not been faithful in  
the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust  
the true riches?

Parable of the talents in Matthew 25: Two of the  
servants were able to give more than they were given.

Because you can only serve one master.

*Like it or not, much of our lives revolve around  
money. The hours we work, the houses we live in,  
and other things all depend on our use of money.*

**The Bible is an  
instruction  
manual of how to  
deal with money.**

*The opinions of many Christians concerning giving*

*The preacher just wants my money*

*The preacher is not being greedy. He preaches  
about money because the subject is found in  
the Word of God. If he does not discuss the  
subject, he is failing his duty as a Gospel  
Preacher!*

*Religion is not about money, it is about souls*

*How you handle money and how you give back  
to God will influence your eternal destiny in  
heaven or hell. The way you view money is a  
reflection of your faith, discipline and love.*

*Don't discuss giving publicly, it will just happen by itself*

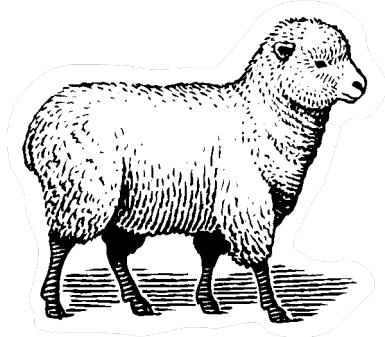
*Perhaps the reason why we don't discuss money publicly is because we do not handle it properly. A Christian's financial responsibility needs to be openly taught as much as Church attendance, baptism and prayer.*

## GIVING IN THE BIBLE

### I. Giving in the Old Testament

**Cain and Abel, Genesis 4:3-5** And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD. Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.

**Hebrews 11:4** By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.



*Cain was punished because he did not give enough!*

**Abraham, Genesis 14:19-21** Abraham was a generous giver when he promised to the King of Salem a tithe of all that he had because he realized Melchizedek was a man of God.

**Jacob, Genesis 28:20-22** Jacob vowed to give to the Lord while he was still poor and kept his promise even when he became wealthy. This is a lesson for all of us concerning commitment to God.

**Law of Moses, Leviticus 19:9-10** Jewish farmers had an obligation to help the poor through the benevolence of leaving areas of their fields with grain. More than this base level of giving, they also gave God their very best, Exodus 22:29, Numbers 3:46-48

**Free Will Offerings, Deuteronomy 16:10-11** The Jews became very liberal with their giving as illustrated in the providing for the Tabernacle, Exodus 36:6-7

**The Old Testament was written for our example, Romans 15:4** For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

## **II. Giving in the Teachings of Jesus**

*The four gospels contain 89 chapters and 123 references to giving*

**Matthew 6:19-20** “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

**Acts 20:35** Jesus said “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

**Matthew 20:28** “For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

**Matthew 16:24** Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

**Luke 12:19-21** To the foolish farmer: God said, ‘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.

**Mark 12:42** The poor widow who only gave a mite yet was recognized by God.

**Luke 12:15** 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.”

## **III. Giving in the Book of Acts**

**Acts 2:43-45** The early church gave to support the poor

**Acts 4:32-35** They shared their possession with one another as they had need.

**Acts 4:36-37** Barnabas sold land and laid it at the Apostles feet to help the church

**Acts 5:1-11** Annanias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Spirit about their giving and were struck down.

**Acts 8:18-20** The Apostles refused to sell the Holy Spirit in order to gain money

**Acts 10:2, 31** Cornelius was not yet a Christian but his giving to the poor was cited as proof of his goodness

**Acts 11:29-30** The Christians at Antioch sent relief to the Christians in Jerusalem to help them through the famine

**Acts 24:17** Paul took a gift from many Gentile churches to the Christians at Jerusalem (1 Corinthians 16:1-4, 2 Corinthians 8:9, Romans 15:25-33)

## IV. Giving in the Letters of the New Testament

1 Timothy 6:10 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.

The New Testament warns us about covetousness

Colossians 3:5-6 Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience.

James 4:5-7 Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"? But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "*God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.*" Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

***"Money has the power to possess people while it makes them think they possess it."***

### WHY DOES GOD EXPECT US TO GIVE TO HIM?

#### A. God does not need our money

1. He already owns all of heaven and earth, Genesis 14:19-20, Psalm 24:1, 89:11)
2. He already owns the beast of the field and the silver and gold of the world, Psalm 50:10-12, Haggai 2:8
3. He already owns all the souls of men (Ezekiel 18:4) and has purchased every Christian (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

#### B. But we give because our life is a stewardship

1. We are to be faithful as good stewards of that which belongs to another, Luke 16:1-4
2. We will give account of what we have done with our money to God, 1 Peter 4:10, 1 Corinthians 4:1-2, Romans 14:12

*Covetousness is like cancer...you don't know that you have it until it has eaten up your entire body.*

#### C. Fellowship involves mutual participation by individual Christians

1. We are to share together in love, 1 Peter 1:22, Colossians 2:2
2. We are to share together in suffering, Galatians 6:2  
*Equality in bearing the financial burden of the church does not mean giving as much*

*as one another ( 1 Corinthians 10:12), but each one giving according to his ability.*

3. We all are fellow servants of God, Galatians 2:9-10, Philippians 1:5
4. In matters of giving money,            “Let each one of you” 1 Corinthians 16:1-2  
    “According to his ability” 2 Corinthians 8:12

*Individual ability is the basis of personal responsibility (Matthew 25:41-44)*

#### **D. Love and Surrender are the basis of giving, 2 Corinthians 8:1-5, 2 Corinthians 8:8-24**

1. A person cannot serve both God and mammon, Luke 16:13
2. Giving is the proof of the sincerity of our love, 2 Corinthians 8:8-9
3. Giving is voluntary, not compulsory, 2 Corinthians 8:12

#### **E. Characteristics of New Testament Giving**

1. Regularly (1 Corinthians 16:1-2)    “First day of the week”
2. Systematically (1 Corinthians 16:1-2)                                    “Lay by in store”
3. Individually (1 Corinthians 16:1-2)                                    “Each one of you”
4. Liberally (2 Corinthians 8:1-4)    “Freely willing”
5. Purposefully (2 Corinthians 8:12-15)                                    “Not haphazardly”
6. Cheerfully (2 Corinthians 9:7)    “God loves a cheerful giver”
7. Readily (2 Corinthians 8:12)    “Whatever his gift may be”

*An example of human nature is found in the Biblical bodies of water known as the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. The Sea of Galilee is somewhat smaller than the Dead Sea but it is teeming with life. Numerous trees and greenery line its banks and its waters are filled with fish of every sort. Many birds and animals live all along its banks taking advantage of the life giving water. Just fifty miles to the South is a larger body of water known as the Dead Sea. Here there is no life: no fish, no animals and no vegetation. What is the difference? While the Sea of Galilee receives less water than the Dead Sea, it also drains into the Jordan River. The Sea of Galilee drains almost exactly the same amount of water that it receives. While precious water and nutrients enter, similar water flows away. The Dead Sea, one of the lowest elevations of the earth, has no point of drainage. The only way anything leaves the Dead Sea is through evaporation. Because of this the highly saline lake is dead to all life. Mankind is much the same way. As we learn to give what we have been prospered, we will begin to experience true life and real joy. When our immaturity causes us to hoard wealth and blessing, we begin to stagnate and experience great troubles of the heart. When thinking about giving to others, remember the lesson of the Biblical Seas: the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. As Jesus said in Matthew 10:8 "Freely you have received, freely give."*



## QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think the Bible teaches so much about money?
2. Why do so many people avoid the subject of money when discussing religious matters?
3. What does the example of Jacob in Genesis 28:20-22 teach us about giving whether we are rich or poor?
4. How many references to giving are there in the gospels?
5. What sin did Paul compare to covetousness to in Colossians 3:5-6?
6. If God already owns everything, why does he want us to give to the Church?
7. Why is the love of money so dangerous to the soul?
8. What do the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea teach us about the importance of giving?
9. Why is it important for us to give every first day of the week even if we are only paid monthly?
10. What do you plan to do to improve your giving to God?





# *The Gift of Giving*

## A STUDY OF CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP

### Lesson Two: Why Don't People Give Like They Should?

#### How Are We Giving As Members of a Congregation of the Lord's Church?

The median income in 2004 for a family of four in Mississippi was \$46,810 a year or \$900.12 a week.

The Siwell Road congregation has around 190 family units with a weekly budget of \$7000.00.

To reach our budget, each family unit must contribute at least **\$36.85** a week.

To reach budget, each family unit must give an average of only **4%** of their earnings to God.



#### **YET WE HAVE NOT REACHED OUR BUDGET FOR THIS YEAR!**

*That means many of our families are contributing less to the Lord each week than they pay for cable TV, for eating out one meal or for one night in a hotel while on vacation.*

*What will these people say to the Lord on the Day of Judgment?*

*What will we say if we fail to warn them?*

#### B. Who gives in the typical Church of Christ?

In most congregations of the Lord's church, only 15% of the congregation gives 90% of the contribution.

Many congregations have more than half that refuse to give anything to the Lord.

C. While the subject may be uncomfortable to many, it must be discussed for we will be judged by what we give to God.

*Our giving is a reflection of our faith, our service and our love!*

*In the 12<sup>th</sup> century, many of the Crusaders gathered together to try to free the Bible lands from the grip of the Muslim faith. Most of these Crusaders were willing to give up their families, homes and wealth for what they viewed as their service to God. However, many who went were little more than mercenaries looking to plunder foreign lands in order to gain vast wealth. The pope commanded all soldiers to be baptized before the army could march out. Not willing to commit wholly to the cause, many of the Crusaders determined a way to obey the pope without full submission. As the mercenary was being immersed in baptism, he would hold up his sword above the water so that it never went under. In their mind, this allowed these Crusaders the opportunity to keep something for themselves that was not wholly given to God but rather could still be used for selfish purposes. How many today spiritually have held their wallets, their families or even their traditions "above the water" as they partially devoted themselves to the Lord?*

## I. Why Don't People Give Like They Should?

- *Many do not give because of covetousness*

1 Timothy 6:10 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.

Colossians 3:5 Covetousness is idolatry

Matthew 6:19-20 We must lay up our treasures in heaven

*An old preacher said, "Of all the sins I have heard people repent of, I have yet to hear one person publicly confess the sin of covetousness." Yet pride and covetousness are the two prevalent sins of American Christians.*

- ***Many do not give because of a lack of teaching***

We are a product of what we have been taught.

We stress the importance of baptism (Acts 2:38) and church attendance (Hebrews 10:24-25) but not giving (1 Corinthians 16:2)! James tells us that whoever breaks any part of the law is a law breaker.

- ***Many do not give because of a weak faith***

Matthew 6:18-30 Seek God over the material possessions of this earth.

James 2:18 But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

*You can tell what one really believes by his actions.*

- ***Many do not give because they refuse to cooperate with the local church***

Christians are to be workers together with one another and with God (2 Corinthians 6:1)

Giving to a Christian college or a Christian charity is not the same as giving to a local church

The contribution plate is not to be an election box.  
Remember that giving is an act of worship.

If one cannot share in the fellowship of giving in the local church, how can they share in the fellowship of prayer, bible study and singing?



- ***Many do not give because of poor stewardship***

The primary reason people do not give is because they cannot give.

When we find ourselves deeply in debt, we no longer have the opportunity to decide where our money will be spent. As Proverbs 22:7 says, "*The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is slave to the lender.*"

## **How can I be a faithful steward?**

1. Be faithful now matter how much (or little) you have, Matthew 25:14-15, 21

*"Scripture regards money as an index to a person's true character. All through Scripture there is a close relationship between the development of a person's character and how he handles money."*

2. Be faithful with all that you have

Giving to God is not all that's important to God. We are to be good stewards in all of our financial activities.

Hosea 4:6 says, "My people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge."

We are to obey God in all things, 2 Corinthians 5:9-10 Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

## **II. Why Should We Give to God?**

- ***Because God is our Master***

Job was able to worship after losing everything: he understood God was his master

Moses was able to forsake Egypt to be with God's people, he realized God provided for him

We must come to realize that God owns everything

Luke 14:38 "You cannot be my disciple unless you give up everything."

***Its not "God, what should I do with my money."***

***Its "God, what should I do with your money."***

- ***Because God is in Control***

1 Chronicles 29:11, Psalm 135:6, Isaiah 45:6-7, Romans 8:28

Why would God put us through difficult times?

To accomplish his intentions, Joseph in Gen. 45:5-8

To develop our character, Romans 5:3-4

To discipline his children, Hebrews 12:6, 10, 11

- ***Because God is our Provider***

God will provide for all of our needs, Matthew 6:33, 1 Kings 17:4, 6

We are in fact tools for God upon this earth. That includes the money that we have!

### **III. What Do We Mean When We Discuss A Generous Giver?**

**It is not:** The size of the gift given to God

The nobility of the cause given to

Paul said even the largest gifts are empty acts if given for the wrong reason, 1 Corinthians 13:3

**It is:** A person reconciled fully to God's sacrificial gift.

A person who enjoys the opportunity to give, he does not see it as a burden

A person with an eternal perspective of the age to come

A person willing to follow the example of Jesus (Acts 20:35) in giving

A person that recognizes that God owns everything, who puts his money where God wants it.

A person who sees giving as it is: an act of worship! He is not concerned about the praise of others or himself but for God's glory.

#### IV. What Does it Take to be a Generous Giver?

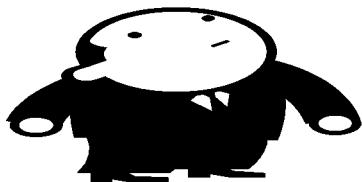
It is not:      What the world thinks of our gift

Or necessarily the size or percentage of our gift

It is:      Determined by our capacity (He knows what we possess)

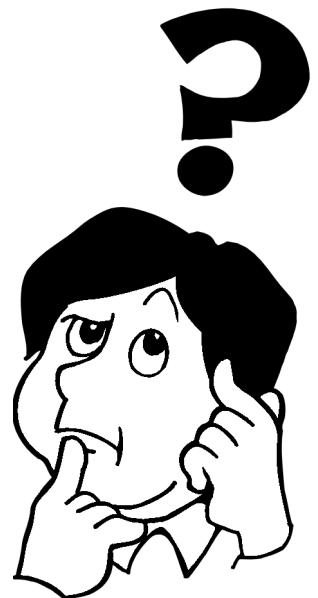
Determined by our attitude (He knows our hearts)

*Jesus spoke to this question directly when He compared the temple gifts of the rich men with the gift of the poor widow (Luke 21:1-4). By Jesus' reckoning, the widow gave more than the others because she gave all she had to live on. Her capacity was very little, but her attitude was extravagant. The rich, on the other hand, had so much wealth that even large gifts required little devotion of them. Biblical generosity is not any given dollar amount. Nor it is even just a given percentage rate (although percentage of what you have is an important indicator of attitude, which is of great importance to God). To be biblically generous is to recognize God's great gift toward us in Christ, and to give extravagantly in worship to Him, relative to what one has. To put it differently, biblical generosity is best gauged by asking not "How much am I giving to God?" but "How much am I keeping for myself?"*



## QUESTIONS

1. What percentage of your income do you give back to God?
2. How are some Christians today like the mercenaries of the Crusades who held their swords above the water as they were baptized?
3. How is the love of money a root of evil?
4. Why do you think so few people ever repent of covetousness?
5. Why do we emphasize baptism and church attendance instead of giving?
6. What should you say to someone who refuses to give because they are mad at the elders or the preacher?
7. In what way is money an index to a person's character?
8. What does it take for us to be considered a generous giver?
9. Do you believe that God sees our giving practices today?





# *The Gift of Giving*

## A STUDY OF CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP

### Lesson Three: What Giving Does

#### For us Spiritually

- **Giving is a test of our souls**

Everything today is tested (*The magazine Consumer Reports tests every product that you might want to buy. Our bodies are tested anytime we go into the hospital. Anyone who spends time in school soon learns the importance of surviving tests*).

God tests us spiritually as well.

Remember the example of Abraham who had to sacrifice his son Isaac, Gen. 22

Job was tested by God, Job 1:9-11, Job 2:3-7

James 1:12 *Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.*

- **Giving is a test of our faith**

Often our focus when discussing faith is only on baptism and church attendance

God focuses on what we give

Abraham and his son, Romans 4:20

The disciples, Matthew 6:18-30

The calming of the storm, Matthew 8:23-27

Walking on the water, Matthew 14:25-31

Leaven of Pharisees and materialism of disciples, Matthew 16:5-8

- **Giving is a test of our love**

John 3:16 God loved so he GAVE

A father proves his love by his giving to his children.

As children mature, they reflect the nature of their parents.

- **Giving is a test of our vision**

With no vision the people will perish

John 4:35 Lift up your eyes

Acts 11:27-30 (2 Corinthians 8:1-4) Macedonians saw a need and filled it

- **Giving is a test of our loyalty**

Daniel still prayed, Daniel 6:10

Barnabas gave, Acts 4:36-37

Ananias and Sapphira were disloyal and payed, Acts 5:1-11

Are we disloyal with our love of money?

*A vain man says, "Win gold and wear it."*

*A generous man says, "Win gold and share it."*

*A miser man says, "Win gold and hoard it."*

*A prodigal man says, "Win gold and hoard it."*

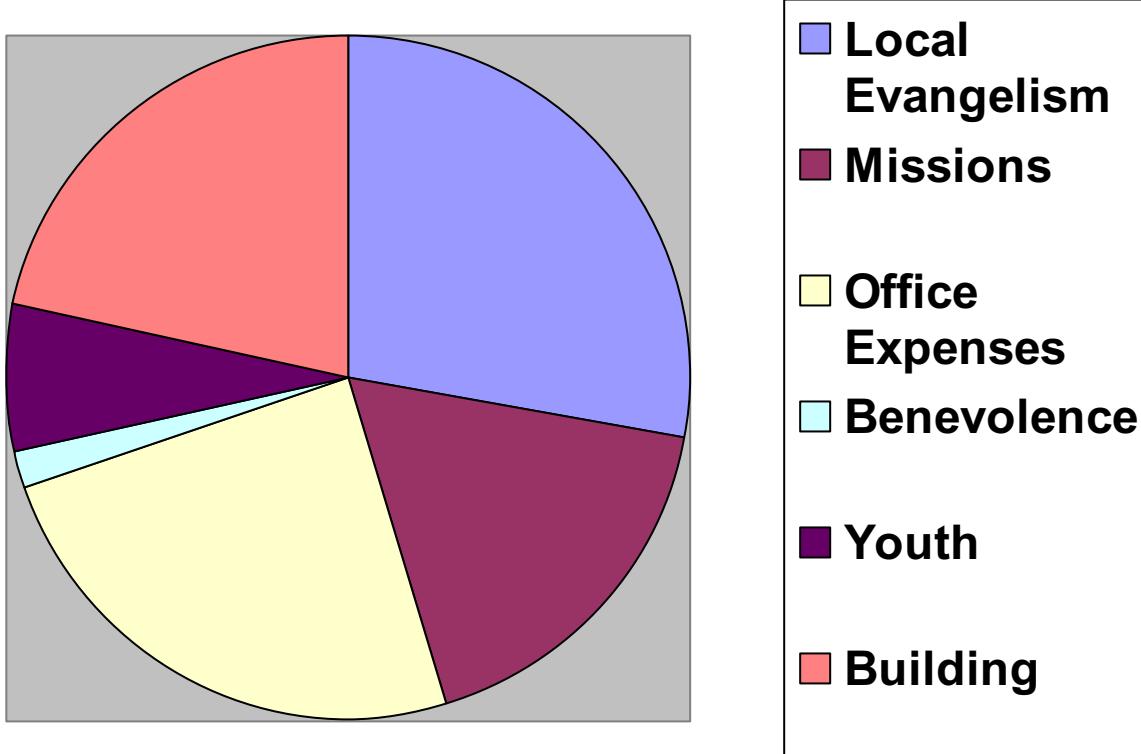
*A banker man says, "Win gold and lend it."*

*A gambler man says, "Win gold and lose it."*

*A Christian man says, "Win gold and use it."*

## For us Physically

### Budget for Siwell Road in 2005



Local Evangelism	\$101,950	27%
State and Foreign Missions	\$64,150	18%
Office Expenses	\$89,513	25%
Benevolence	\$5,200	2%
Children and Youth	\$26,100	7%
Building Expenses	\$79,000	21%
Total Budget	\$365,913 a year or \$7036.88 a week	

**Of every dollar you contribute this year:**

*27 cents goes to local evangelism and preacher salaries  
25 cents goes to office expenses  
21 cents goes to building expenses  
18 cents goes to mission work  
7 cents goes to youth and class materials  
2 cents goes to benevolence*

## Our Mission Work

State Wide:	Magnolia Bible College Preacher Training	Magnolia Messenger Moorhead Student Center
Foreign:	Poland Voice of Truth Truth for Today Honduras Medical Team East Caribbean Missions	South Pacific World Bible School Eastern European Missions Deaf Mission Trip Honduras Preaching School

*Now dare with me to dream....*

*This budget is what we have done while our congregation gives approximately \$7,000 a week. Now if each of us gave 5% of our means (A family making 46,810 a year would give at least \$45 a week), that would raise our budge to \$8550 a week. Since building and office expenses would not rise, that extra \$1550 a week would go solely to mission work. If each of us would pledge to give only 5% of our income we could more than double the mission work done in this congregation! Now what do you think could happen if we gave 10%?*



## Christians Enjoy Giving To God

- **The Joy of Receiving**

There is joy in receiving (Children, Christmas)

But the idea of getting something for nothing leads to immature actions such as stealing and gambling

It is wonderful to receive but there is something better

- **The Joy of Giving**

Laying up treasures in heaven

"Not grudgingly or of necessity because the Lord loves a cheerful giver."

Macedonians gave even out of their poverty

Remember the widow's mite

- **The Joy of Following**

The example of God who gave his only Son, John 3:16, Romans 8:32

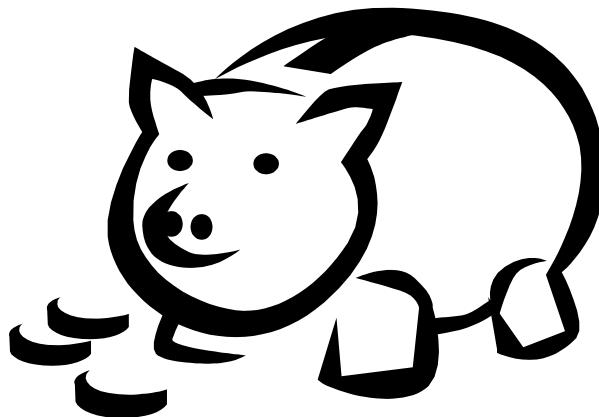
God has blessed us in so many ways, James 1:5 and Ephesians 1:3

We are to give as well, Romans 12:1

Are you a cloud or a sponge, a channel or a clog of blessings?

Remember that you can't out give God, Malachi 3:10,

2 Corinthians 9:6



## QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think God tests his children?
2. Why do you think God asked Abraham to sacrifice his son?
3. How does our giving make us like God? John 3:16

4. What surprised you most about the percentages of each dollar used in Siwell Road's budget?

5. Why would it be such a big deal if each family determined to give only 9 dollars a week more to the Lord in this congregation? (Raising our budget from \$7000 to \$8550)

6. How can Christians find joy in giving money to the Lord?

7. What is the danger of a person expecting something for nothing?





# The Gift of Giving

## A STUDY OF CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP

### Lesson Four: Giving as Worship

Many people do not realize that giving to God is a part of our worship to him. In part, at least, worship may be described as an expression of awe, devotion, and love - from man, the creature, to his Creator. One aspect of this reverential disposition can entail the presentation of gifts.

#### Worship “Given”

First, though, this point must be made. Almighty God, being entirely self-sufficient, requires no gift from frail humanity to *sustain* him in any way. He is not “served by men’s hands, as though he needed anything” (Acts 17:25; cf. Psalm 50:10-12; Romans 11:35). He is pleased, however, when we, consistent with divine revelation, exhibit the spirit of generosity.

Second, it is a fact beyond dispute that the act of “giving” can be an overture of worship. Consider:

- a. In the Old Testament, sacrifices to the Lord were designated as “gifts” (Numbers 18:11; cf. Hebrews 5:1).
- b. When the wisemen from the east worshipped the baby Jesus, their devotion was manifested in the form of “gifts” (Matthew 2:11).
- c. It is generally conceded that the “fellowship” mentioned in Acts 2:42 (in concert with other items of worship) embraces the act of “giving” (cf. Romans 15:26; 2 Corinthians 9:13).
- d. When the Philippian saints gave their money for the support of Paul, God viewed it as “an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God” (Philippians 4:18).
- e. An inspired writer admonished: “But to do good and to communicate [be generous] forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased” (Hebrews 13:16).

In view of the foregoing passages, it necessarily would follow that if the New Testament places upon the Christian the obligation to “give” of his means unto God, and when he neglects that responsibility, he has refused to worship his Maker, at least in that respect.

## **Worship Prescribed**

Another key element in this matter is the fundamental fact that the outpouring of worship, under the divine regime, is neither optional, nor arbitrary. Rather, it is obligatory and prescribed. By “prescribed” we mean that *before* one even begins to express his reverence to God, he must consult the documents wherein “it is written” as to *how* worship is to be rendered. The Lord Jesus said: “God is spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24). Truth here has reference to the “content” of Christian revelation. It is certain, therefore, that deity must be worshipped – not according to our own inclinations (Colossians 2:23) – but in harmony with sacred revelation. This means, in the context of our present discussion, that our giving must conform to God’s instruction; we are not left to our own subjective ingenuity to figure out the procedure. Yet many proceed on that basis. We believe that any honest student of the Bible must concede that giving, as an act of worship, must be according to the guidelines set forth in the New Testament. Anything less than this results in serious error.

Why is it, though, that we appear to be so conscientious about other items of worship, and yet so nonchalant about our giving? Why is it that numerous members of the church are rather unconcerned with the specifics of New Testament instruction relative to God’s pattern of giving, when they would go “ballistic” if an instrument of music were introduced into the worship, or if the elements of the Lord’s supper were changed? When the church becomes as conscientious about the former as it is the latter, wonderful changes in our ability to evangelize will be evident. Let us, therefore, give attention to the divine pattern relative to giving, as expressed both in explicit instruction and in principle.

## **A Primary Text**

When Paul penned the epistle that is commonly called 1 Corinthians, he commenced the 16th chapter with: “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I gave order to the churches of Galatia, so also do ye.” There are several points here to be stressed.

## **The Sacred Obligation**

First, there is the term *diatasso*, rendered “order.” The word is employed some sixteen times in the New Testament. It presupposes a subordinate relationship of one who is commanded to do something (cf. Acts 18:2; cf. Luke 17:7-10).

Second, the verb “do” reflects, in the original text, a command which rather summarizes the obligation of both the Galatian churches and the Corinthian congregation. The assertion, proposed by some, that the charge here imposed was but a temporal and local requirement is incorrect. While the immediate context pertained to a specific need (relief for the churches in Judaea), the text provides a precedent for determining how any and all churches are authorized to meet their financial needs.

## The Specified Time

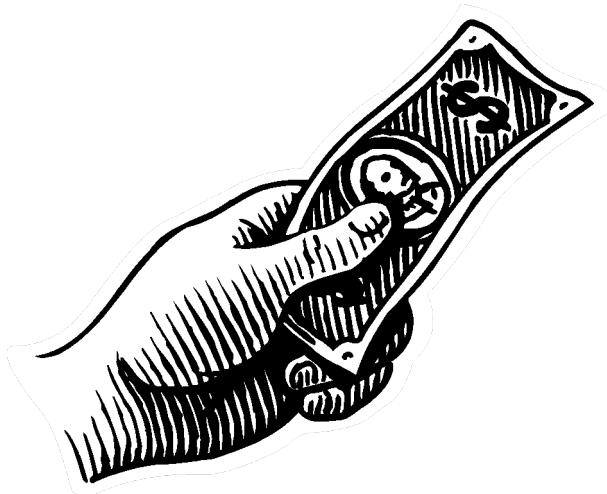
The Christian is not limited as to when he may give for the benefit of others. For example, the poor we have with us always, and when ever we *will*, we may do them good (Mark 14:7; cf. Galatians 6:10). Be that as it may, Paul's injunction is that each Christian contribute upon "the first day of every week."

The Greek expression is *kata mian sabbatou*, literally "every first [day] of the week" (cf. NASB, NIV). The preposition *kata* is used distributively, indicating a succession, e.g.. *every city* (Acts 15:21), *every year* (Luke 2:41), and, in the present instance, *every first [day] of the week*". The New English Bible has it simply: "Every Sunday." The element of worship is not the act of "dropping a check into the plate" (which a husband could do on behalf of himself and his wife, or *vice versa*); rather, it is the *determination* to set aside, for the Lord's day, a portion of one's income for the support of God's work and the *fulfillment* of that resolution.

## Individual Obligation

The responsibility to worship in giving rests upon every child of God. The apostle charges that "each of you" is to contribute to the Lord's work. The husband and wife should decide together what they are willing to give. If there are two incomes, a

portion from *both* is required. If the young Christian has a part-time job, he should contribute from that. Parents should teach their children the principles of giving from their earliest years. Youngsters should be instructed as to how to budget their income (be it an allowance, paper route income, etc.). Even the retired pensioner is not exempt from this act of worship. Every Christian with an income must express his devotion to God in the grace of giving (cf. 2 Corinthians 8:1, 4, 6-7).



## The Church Treasury

Under the Mosaic system, there was a treasury in the temple, which was there according to the "pattern" given by God (1 Chronicles 28:1ff). The prophet Malachi admonished Israel: "Bring the tithes into the treasury, all of them ... (3:10 NEB; cf. 1 Chronicles 9:26). In Jesus' day, the court of the women within the temple was also called the "treasury" (Mark 12:41ff; Luke 21:1ff; John 8:20), because it contained thirteen chests around the walls for Jewish contributions. Nine were for gifts required of the worshippers; the remaining four were to accommodate strictly voluntary gifts. As the antitype of the temple, the church also has a "treasury" to facilitate its financial operations. Paul says the Christian is to "lay by him (or by itself) in store." The word *thesaurizoon*, rendered "in store" is literally, "put into the treasury". MacKnight translates the verse: "On the first day of every week let each of you lay somewhat by

itself, according as he may have prospered, putting it into the treasury, that when I come there may then be no collections".

It is erroneous to suggest that Paul was merely urging his brethren to save something "at home," or put it aside in a "special place," as some translations have suggested. This would have defeated the apostle's purpose in not wanting to have to contact each Christian individually when he came.

The notion that one may simply free-lance his contribution in doing good, with no obligation to the local church, is a myth contrived by the covetous. Wherever else the saint may give, his weekly contribution to the local congregation should be unwavering.

## Proportionate Giving

The Scriptures are eminently fair in imposing an obligation upon each saint to give into the treasury every Sunday. In connection with the amount, there are biblical principles to guide the conscientious child of God.

1. Giving, as an act of worship takes a certain priority in terms of one's income. Reflect upon the following precedents.

In the patriarchal period of history, when Abraham "paid tithes" to Melehizedek, God's king and priest of Salem, the Hebrew leader offered the "chief spoils" (Hebrews 7:4). The Greek word, *akrothinion* literally means "the top of a heap," hence denotes the choicest of the bounty.

During the Mosaic time, the Jews were to offer the "firstlings" of their crops and herds (Exodus 13:12-13; 23:19). In the days of the judges, the priestly sons of Eli were condemned, at least in part, because, in offering sacrifices to God, they: (a) took whatever portion of the meat they desired; (b) they took *their* share first (1 Samuel 2:13-15).

Does Jehovah take delight in leftovers? The Christian should set aside a reasonable portion of his income to God *first*, then adjust his living standard accordingly. Regrettably, most folks follow the reverse order.

2. Each Christian is to give "as he may prosper," or "according to his ability" (Acts 11:29). This is proportional giving. Amazingly, some in the early church gave even *beyond their ability* (2 Corinthians 8:3), and they were commended for it.

Those who have more should give more (both in amount and percentage).

When the more prosperous generously give of their abundance, to compensate for the deficit of the poorer folk, the type of "equality" that God desires among his people will prevail (see 2 Corinthians 8:12-15).

While it is true that the New Testament sets no percentage (as in the case of the tithe under the Mosaic regime), surely those who flourish under the "better covenant" (Hebrews 7:22) will want to go beyond the standard of the inferior economy.

The least God ever stipulated for his people in the support of his work was 10% (Genesis 14:20; 28:22; Numbers 18:21-24); the most he has accepted is 100% (Mark 12:41-44) – which, of course, is not required. But surely, somewhere between these two examples, the child of God can find his appropriate level of giving.

### The Generous Disposition

N.B. Hardeman once said that the covetous person is the most un-Christ-like individual on earth – because he stands in such glaring contrast to the loving Savior who gave himself for our sins (Galatians 1:4). There is little doubt that the Lord expects his people to be generous in their giving.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul exhorts that those who give should do so with “*liberality*” (12:8 ASV). And to the Corinthians, in urging these saints to fulfill their commitment to needy brethren, the apostle promises that God would “enrich” them unto “all *liberality*” (2 Corinthians 9:11 ASV).

In both passages, the term rendered “*liberality*” is the Greek *haplotes*. This noun carries a variety of meanings. It is found seven times in Paul’s epistles. While it sometimes suggests the idea of “singleness” of purpose, or even “sincerity,” in certain texts it almost certainly means generous (see 2 Corinthians 8:2; 9:11,13; Romans 12:8). The adverb *haplos* is used to describe the generosity of God in the gifts he lavishes upon humanity (James 1:5).

In a passage that deals with how to evaluate the real treasures of life, Jesus provided the following admonition. “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where thy treasure is, there will the heart be also. The lamp of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is the darkness! No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matthew 6:19-24).



In the midst of this instructive message, the Savior speaks of the contrast between the eye that is “single,” and that which is “evil” (vv.22-23). The original term for “single”

is the adjective *haplous*; the word for “evil” is *poneros*. William Barclay has shown that *poneros* is used in the Greek Old Testament of one who is stingy; it describes the person who gives only in a grudging fashion (cf. Deuteronomy 15:9; Proverbs 23:6; 28:22).

By inference, therefore, in this context one may conclude that the “single” eye, that which illuminates the entire person, is the generous, giving vision (1958, pp. 247-248). It is not without significance, then, that Paul admonished the Corinthian brethren – who lagged behind in their giving – that they be not characterized by a “grudging” disposition, i.e., one marred by regret. Rather, they should nourish cheerful hearts (cf. 2 Corinthians 9:7).

### **The Stewardship Concept**

The key to acceptable giving is to acknowledge the role that we sustain to God. A prime concept in our relationship to the Creator is that of “stewardship.” Some background information might prove helpful.

Many Jews who lived outside the borders of Palestine owned land within the country. It was common, therefore, to utilize a “steward” – be he a hired employee or a slave – in the management of one’s property. The Greek term for “steward” is the compound word, *oikonomos*, literally a “house ruler.” It denotes one who oversees or manages the property of a superior. Note this descriptive.

“[The steward] was in charge of the whole administration of the house or the estate; he controlled the staff; he issued the supplies and the rations; he ran the whole household; but however much he controlled the household staff of slaves, he himself was still a slave where the master was concerned” (Barclay, 1956, p. 4).

Now here are the facts of the case. God, as creator of the universe, is owner of this earth and all its contents. We are but managers of his resources. We do not have the right to boast: “What I make is mine. I will do with it as I please.”

When one fathoms the ennobling truth that God is sovereign; that we are his stewards, and that as such, we must be “faithful” (trustworthy) in this capacity (see 1 Corinthians 4:2), such a discovery will alter the entire course of his life.

In his book, **This Grace Also**, Mac Layton has a chapter titled, “Four Stewards In The Kingdom.” These are depicted as:

1. The one who possesses much, but with it he does but little. The rich fool, a character in one of Jesus’ parables, aptly illustrates this sort of irresponsible person (Luke 12:16ff).
2. There is the steward who does much even though he has but a little. The poor widow, whom Christ observed in the temple treasury, is a thrilling example of this type of steward (Mark 12:41ff).
3. Some folks have little, and with it they do little, laboring under the illusion that their want exempts them from the act of giving-worship. The one-talent villain, described as lazy and wicked, personifies such a faithless steward (Matthew 25:14ff).
4. Finally, there is the steward who, blessed with much, does much. Abraham was very rich (Genesis 13:2), yet he lived in a tent and walked with God daily (Hebrews 11:8ff). His life has been a blessing to millions spanning the centuries.

The Christian must rid himself of the notion that he takes a certain portion of his income, contributes it on the Lord’s day, because this is “God’s share” – while the rest is *his* to use as he pleases. Oh, no. The faithful child of God must exercise godly stewardship in every phase of his spending.

### A Summary

What have we learned in this survey, as we have reflected upon our giving as an act of devotion to Almighty God? The following facts are compelling:

1. As an act of affection and devotion, motivated by the love of Jesus himself, each Christian must contribute into the church treasury each Sunday.
2. Acknowledging that he is but a manager of vast blessings that God has placed at his disposal, the Lord’s disciple must contribute generously and cheerfully, confessing that he is the recipient of more than he can ever repay.

It is the responsibility of elders to counsel the flock of God in fundamental principles of biblical giving. Gospel preachers must never refrain from teaching on this vital theme, even though thoughtless people may accuse them of self-interest. Our prayer should be that the Lord will help us to grow in “this grace also” (2 Corinthians 8:6-7).

## QUESTIONS

1. Is giving really an act of worship to God?
2. How does our giving affect the evangelistic efforts of the Church?
3. Why must Christians give every Sunday?
4. Why does God want every individual Christian to give?
5. Does giving to a charity or good Christian work negate our responsibility to give to the local Church?
6. Why should we place our giving to God first in our budget rather than last?
7. What have you learned in this set of lessons that has changed your perception of giving?

