

On Financial Stewardship—Biblical Principles of Generosity

By: Various Authors

1. Giving Should Be In Significant Proportions.

- a) *The guideline of the tithe* - In the Old Testament, believers were required to give a tenth of their income to the support of the ministry and the needs of the poor. The New Testament does not specifically mention the tithe, but since we are far more blessed and indebted to God than Old Testament believers, we assume that we are held more responsible for generosity, not less. Thus the tithe (10%) annual gift of income is a kind of minimum guideline for giving.
- b) *The guideline of sacrifice* - Paul says about the Macedonians, “they gave as much as they were able and even beyond their ability” (II Corinthians 8:3). That means they gave until it meant a sacrifice in their lifestyle and then some.
- c) *The guideline of responsibility* - Christians are also to give “according to their ability” (Acts 11:29). There are seasons to economic life. And there are economic responsibilities to our families and to our debts. In many cases, good planning over time will be necessary to move our giving into Biblical proportions without renegeing on legal and personal financial obligations.

2. Giving Should Be A Joyful Response To God's Grace.

Paul asked for money this way: “I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love for you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, he became poor, so that through his poverty you might become rich.” (II Corinthians 8:8-9). What a test! Paul says that the difference between moralists (those who think God accepts them for their good works) and Christians (those who know they are sinners saved purely through grace) is that a Christian wants to give as generously as he or she received. Put starkly: *You always give effortlessly to those things that give your life meaning, to your functional saviors, to your bottom-line “gods.”*

3. Giving Should Be Systematic And Thoughtful.

Paul directed Corinthians to set aside a portion of their wealth each week until he could come and take it to famine victims in Palestine (I Corinthians 8:10-11). Usually “spontaneous” and unplanned giving, while perhaps joyful (principal #2) is not proportionate (principle #1). The actual tally of completely spontaneous giving usually shows little sacrifice involved. We must plan. We must allow the church to help with reminders and directions. A plan:

- a. *Evaluate your own heart with regard to money.*
_What do you most enjoy spending money on? What percentage of your income is going to: a) God’s causes (church, Christian ministries), and b) to people in need (Outside your family). How close is it to 10% of your income? Read Matthew 6:19-34; I Timothy 6:6-10; II Corinthians 8:1-15; 9:6-15. Do you need to adjust your giving in light of eternal values?
- b. *Evaluate the use of your “non-liquid” resources.*
- c. *Do you have a regular plan of giving?* _Follow these three steps (families should do this together): _1) Decide what percentage of your income you will give to the Lord's work this year. 2) Now ask two questions: Is this a sacrificial figure? On the other hand, is it a responsible figure? 3) Now set aside the Lord’s portion first whenever the money is received. It is his, not yours.
- d. *Prayerfully distribute the money among Christian causes as you see fit.*
Remember — the more you trust God with your material treasure, the more he will entrust you with his spiritual treasure (Luke 16:9-12; II Corinthians 9:10-12).

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