

## Christian Giving



At the very mention of the words “giving,” “tithing” and “offering,” many of us experience an internal flinch or tinge. If the pastor does a sermon on giving or spends more than a moment reminding a congregation of it’s responsibility and God’s command to give, many of us are annoyed or would rather he quickly pray and move on. If the subject of giving arises more than once or twice a year, some of us become leery of the motives of the pastor, elder or deacon who would dare bring up the subject so frequently. We wonder aloud and to ourselves, “What’s his angle?” If someone asks us to give to the needy or any other legitimate cause, sometimes, rather than immediately respond with a financial gift, our first thoughts are about what they will “really” do with “our” money.

Why is giving such a hot button topic for many of us? Truthfully, there is “a hustle” for the Christian dollar. We are bombarded with requests for our money. We get them in the mail (snail mail, email and voicemail), on television, over the radio, from the pulpit, and from numerous organizations of all kinds claiming to support the infirmed, poor, disenfranchised and a host of other great causes. Oftentimes these solicitations emphasize obedience to God’s command, make reference to our Christian duty, and suggest that our physical and Christian wellbeing as well as that of our communities, our nation and even our world are at stake, if we don’t give. We are even told that our giving or lack thereof is an acid test of our commitment to the cause of Jesus Christ. With all of this constant pressure, is there any wonder why we feel irritated, annoyed, confused and guilty?

Certainly we want to give to the Lord’s work; but how we are to give, when do we give and how much do we give? Are we to respond because of the guilt we feel as a result of pleas from preachers, radio announcers, telemarketers and spokespersons? How does giving relate to my faith in God or my commitment to building His kingdom? What are my real priorities in life? What do I do, when I want to give, but I can’t afford to give?

To help us answer these questions, consider the following biblical financial principles on giving, which have been adapted from the Willow Creek Good Sense Course:

### **1. WE ARE MADE TO GIVE**

We are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27). God is gracious and generous. We will lead a more satisfied and fulfilled life when we give to others.

### **2. GIVE AS A RESPONSE TO GOD’S GOODNESS**

“Every good and perfect gift is from above” (James 1:17). Therefore, we give out of gratefulness for what we have received.

### **3. GIVE TO FOCUS ON GOD AS OUR SOURCE AND SECURITY**

“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matthew 6:33).

### **4. GIVE TO HELP ACHIEVE ECONOMIC JUSTICE**

“Our desire . . . is that there might be equality. At the present time your plenty will supply what they need” (2 Corinthians 8:13-14). Throughout Scripture, God expresses his concern for the poor and calls us to share with those less fortunate.

### **5. GIVE TO BLESS OTHERS**

“I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. And I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing” (Genesis 12:2-3). If we are blessed with resources beyond our needs, it is not for the purpose of living more lavishly, but to bless others. We are blessed to be a blessing.

### **6. BE WILLING TO SHARE**

“Command them [the rich] to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share” (1 Timothy 6:18).

### **7. GIVE TO BREAK THE HOLD OF MONEY**

Another reason to give is that doing so breaks the hold that money might otherwise have on us. While the Bible doesn’t specifically say so, it is evident that persons who give freely and generously are not controlled by money, but have freedom.

### **8. GIVE JOYFULLY, GENEROUSLY, IN A TIMELY MANNER**

“Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints” (2 Corinthians 8:1-5).

### **9. GIVE WISELY**

“We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift” (2 Corinthians 8:20).

### **10. GIVE EXPECTANTLY AND CHEERFULLY**

“The one who plants generously will get a generous crop. You must each make up your own mind as to how much you should give. Don’t give reluctantly or in response to pressure. For God loves the person who gives cheerfully” (2 Corinthians 9:6-7 NLT; see also verses 10-14).

### **11. MOTIVES FOR GIVING ARE IMPORTANT**

Unless our motives are right, we can give all we have—even our bodies as sacrifices—and it will be for naught (1 Corinthians 13). We can be scrupulous with tithing and still not have the right motives. Jesus rebuked the religious leaders of his day for this very thing: “You hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness” (Matthew 23:23).

## **12. MANAGE YOUR RESOURCES WISELY**

God is not asking us to give what we don't have. However, oftentimes the reason we cannot give is because we have overspent or mismanaged the resources with which God has supplied us. “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!’” (Matthew 25:21). We must use resources wisely and remember that trustworthiness matters to God. “Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own?” (Luke 16:10–12).

The Bible has much to say about Christian giving and I encourage you to study the Scriptures for greater clarity and direction. Ultimately, I believe that what we give and how we give ought to exhibit itself in much the same way that our worship does, because giving *is* worship. Our giving, like our worship, is a response to the truth about who God is. And, among many things, we know that God is love (1 John 4:8, 16); God is giving (John 3:16, Romans 8:32, James 1:17); and God is righteous (Psalm 116:5, 2 Corinthians 9:9-10). Let's worship Him! Let's give!