

GIVING IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

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I. Devine Blessings on the Tithe

God's blessings are always commensurate with man's responsibilities. God has never required man to give to Him other than what He has first blessed him with. God told them if they would obey His commandments that He would bless them abundantly. He said, "...Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out" (Deut. 28:3-6). (Prov. 3:9,10).

The TITHE (first tenth): Tithing was practiced by godly people even before the Law was given (Gen. 14:20). It was commanded in the Law (Deut. 14:22) and reaffirmed by Jesus after the Law (Matt. 23:23). By giving the first tenth of one's income back to God, a believer makes a statement to God about his priorities, and gives testimony to God's ownership of ALL of his possessions. In the Church today, we believe and teach that the tithe is given specifically to the local church where a believer receives his spiritual nourishment (Gal. 6:6,7).

Perhaps the most familiar of God's promises to Israel is found in Malachi 3:10-12, where God challenged Israel to:

Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed; for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of hosts.

God is a loving and a generous God. He is the same today as He was in Israel's day.

In the New Testament the subject of giving is very prominent. The sacred writers have far more to say about the correct and incorrect usage of money than they do about baptism and the Lord's Supper combined. One third of our Lord's parables dealt with money. One verse in every six of the Synoptic Gospels deals with money.

II. The True Nature of Giving

People fail to give as they should because they do not understand the true nature of giving. It should be a joy and a blessing to give.

A. ***It is a grace.*** In 2 Corinthians 8:7 Paul speaks of giving as a grace ("any spiritual gift or attainment"). Grace is a spiritual quality of life not inherent in the natural man, but grows within his heart through the power of the Holy Spirit. Man by nature is selfish. Only after he accepts Christ does he begin to put God and others before himself.

We should pray that God will enable us to have the right attitude towards money and to handle it in a Christ-like manner. The ability to give freely, liberally, and with the proper attitude and motives is a spiritual attainment toward which every Christian should strive.

B. ***Act of Worship.*** The offering is an act of worship of God, not a nuisance. God said, "and they shall not appear before the Lord empty: every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of Jehovah thy God which he hath given thee" (Deut. 16:16,17). God expected them to bring an offering in proportion to their blessings.

In 1 Corinthians 16:2 Paul instructs the church, "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come."

Christian giving is a dedicated act of worship. It is:

1. **A Definite responsibility.** God told Israel not to appear before Him empty handed. The Christian today should feel the same responsibility. The Poet caught the idea in this verse.

"What giving again?" I asked in dismay.
 "And must I keep giving and giving away?"
 "Oh no," said the angel, looking me through.
 "Just give till the Lord stops giving to you."
 (Author Unknown)

2. **Worship directed toward God.** Giving, as an act of worship, should always be to God. In the heart giving is a gift to God.

In the bottom of the offering plate should be painted the hand of Christ so Christians will be reminded their offering is given to Christ.

C. ***It is an Act of Love.*** Christian giving should also be done because of love. All Christian service should be primarily motivated by love. (2 Cor. 8:24; 1 John 3:18). God can tell more about our love for Him through the offering plate than by our claims of love for Him.

In summary, Christian giving is a grace that God develops in our lives through His Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience and worship unto God. It is an act of love motivated by the love of God towards us and springing from the love of God in our hearts. John states it clearly when he says, "we love Him, because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

III. Reasons for Giving

A. ***Advance the work of the kingdom.*** It takes money or material wealth to carry on God's work in this world. It takes money to support preaching of the Gospel, to care for widows, orphans, to build church buildings, send missionaries, and print Bibles (Phil. 4:15,16).

B. ***To develop spirituality in the Christian.*** God requires us to give to develop Christian character and God-likeness in His children. All of God's laws and requirements are for our good. (2 Cor. 9:11).

God wants the man not the money. But he uses money to reach the man. (Matt. 6:21). In Luke 16:10-12, money is a testing ground.

He that is faithful in very little is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in very little is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?

You never see a truly spiritual man who is stingy; stinginess is the block which prevents God from filling his life with true righteousness.

God requires us to give in an effort to instill within us:

1. **A right attitude toward money.** The Lord wants us to develop the concept that money is our servant, not our master. Money can be used as a blessing when it is the servant of a Christian, but when money becomes the master, tragedy can result (Mark 10).

2. **Develop the Godlike quality of unselfishness.** God loved us so much that He gave His Son. God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy, has no trace of selfishness in Him. He asks us to give that we may develop this same spirit within us.

The best definition of Christianity is – “give, give, give”. The words “love” and “give” are inseparable and form the basis of true Christian living.

C. **Future Accountability.** Jesus said, “...and then he shall reward every man according to his works” (Matt. 16:27; 2Cor. 5:10; Heb. 9:27).

God rebuked the Jews for their greed and accused them of robbing Him. When they asked wherein they had robbed Him, He said “in tithes and offering. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed Me, even this whole nation” (Mal. 3:8,9). We must learn to give in the right proportion as well as with the right attitude and motive lest we be condemned at the judgment of God.

IV. What is the Standard of Christian Liberality?

Man is not qualified to set the standard of liberality. This would create in the church a situation similar to ancient Israel when “...every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Judg. 17:6).

And if a man will at all redeem ought of his tithes, he shall add thereto the fifth part thereof (Lev. 27:31).

A. **God is the only one who can set the standard of liberality.**

There is no maximum amount that a Christian can give. The Bible indicates a starting place for Christian giving. The Jew in the Old Testament gave a first tithe to support the Lord’s work (Lev. 27:30-32; Num. 18:21-28). In addition he gave a second tenth in worship of God (Deut. 12:17-19). The righteous Jew also gave offerings in addition to the tithe (Mal. 3:8).

B. **More is required of the Christian than the Jew.** The New Testament urges the Christian to give liberally (Rom. 12:8); to give bountifully and cheerfully (2 Cor. 9:6,7). Jesus told his disciples “Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:20).

The Christian should begin with the tithe and exceed that just as much as His love for God dictates, and the necessities of life permit.

The Christian has a greater covenant with God (Heb. 8:6). He has better promises under that covenant (Heb. 8:6; 2 Peter 1:4). He has a greater commission to carry the Gospel to the whole world (Mark 16:15,16). The needs are greater. To meet these needs the Christian must give more than the Jew to be pleasing to Christ and to reach the world with the Gospel.

- Giving to spiritual causes draws your _____ into eternal matters (Matt. 6:21).
- Giving sets in motion the Spiritual Law of Sowing and _____ (2 Cor. 9:6).
- Giving is a concrete way to prove your _____ (2 Cor. 8:8,9).
- Giving is God's way of sustaining the local _____ ministry (1 Tim. 5:17,18; 1 Cor. 16:2).
- Giving is a key way to help those in _____ (James 2:15,16).
- Giving is the expression of God's _____, therefore a key element of godliness (John 3:16).

QUESTIONS – GIVING IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

FILL IN THE BLANKS

1. 2 Corinthians 9:6, 7 – “But this I say, He which soweth _____ shall reap sparingly; and he which soweth _____ shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his _____, so let him give, not _____ or of _____ for God loveth a _____ giver.”
2. 1 Corinthians 16:2 – “Upon the _____ day of the week let everyone of you lay by him in store, as God hath _____ him, that there be no _____ when I come.”
3. Matthew 5:20 – “For I say unto you, That except your _____ shall _____ the _____ of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case _____ into the kingdom of heaven.”

COMPLETE:

1. Giving is a grace. A grace is _____
2. The true nature of Christian giving indicates that giving is:

3. What two (2) ideas are expressed in the statement that giving is an act of worship?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
4. List reasons why the Christian should give.
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
5. List all the reasons you can why a Christian should give more under grace than the Jew did under Law.
