

Generous Living – Stewards of Grace [Part 2]

Overview

- Section 1** A Divided Heart: competing loyalties & fear *[Last Week]*
- Section 2** Giving First-Fruits: Trusting God for the Rest

FIRST-FRUITS GIVING – Trusting God for the Rest

1. God is the Provider
2. Just as God provided the first portion, I trust Him to provide the rest.

Lev 27:30,32

Primary Lesson: Giving back to God will always be difficult unless I'm convinced it came from His hand first.

Leviticus 27:30, 32

³⁰“Every tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the trees, is the LORD's; it is holy to the LORD.

³² And every tithe of herds and flocks, every tenth animal of all that pass under the herdsman's staff, shall be holy to the LORD.

Important points from this passage?

Luke 21:1-4 *The Widow's Offering*

21 Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the offering box, ² and he saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. ³ And he said, "Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them. ⁴ For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."

WHAT DOES SCRIPTURE TEACH ABOUT:
Amount?

Our Motives?

God's Response?

Giving Style?

2 Corinthians 8:1-12 *Generosity Encouraged*

8 We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, ² for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. ³ For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, ⁴ begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints— ⁵ and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us. ⁶ Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace. ⁷ But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you—see that you excel in this act of grace also.

⁸ I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine.

2 Corinthians 9:6-15 *The Cheerful Giver*

⁶ The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷ Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. ⁹ As it is written: "He has scattered abroad the gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever."

¹⁰ He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. ¹¹ You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. ¹² For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. ¹³ By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, ¹⁴ while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you. ¹⁵ Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!

GIVING AMOUNT GUIDELINES FROM THE BIBLE

OLD TESTAMENT	NEW TESTAMENT
<p>Amount:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10% - Levitical tithe (Num 18:21,24) • 10% - Festival tithe (Deut 14) • 10% - Tithe for the poor (Deut 14) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Every 3rd year 	<p>Amount:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Proportional ✓ According to need ✓ Everything (Widow; Luke 21:1-4) ✓ Rich generosity (2 Cor 8:2) ✓ Out of severe poverty (2 Cor 8:2) ✓ Sacrificial; as much as able (2 Cor 8:3) ✓ Beyond normal means (2 Cor 8:3) ✓ What he has decided in heart (2 Cor 9)
<p>Motive for Giving:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gratitude for provision • Trust for continued provision 	<p>Motive for Giving:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Joy; Cheerfully (2 Cor 9:7; 8:2) ✓ Trust (Luke 21:1-4)) ✓ Assumed; alongside justice, mercy, faithfulness (Matt 23:23) ✓ To please God, not men (Matt 6:1-4) ✓ Viewed as privilege (2 Cor 8:4) ✓ Genuine love; like Christ (2 Cor 8: 8-9) ✓ Willingness (2 Cor 8:12) ✓ Not reluctantly (2 Cor 9:7) ✓ Not under compulsion (2 Cor 9:7)
<p>God's Response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will return to you; will help you (Mal 3:7) • Will throw open flood gates of heaven and pour out blessings (Mal 3:10) • All nations will call you blessed (Mal 3:12) 	<p>God's Response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rewards generous sowers (2 Cor 9:6) • Loves cheerful givers (2 Cor 9:7) • Notices what no one else does (Luke 21) • Makes grace abound (all things, all times, all needs (2 Cor 9:8) • Enlarges my righteousness & thanksgiving to God (2 Cor 9:10-11) • God supplies my ability to give (2 Cor 9:10-11) • Recipients will glorify God (2 Cor 9:13) • Recipients will see grace of God in me (9:14)
<p>Giving Style:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obedience to a command • Generously; often 	<p>Giving Style:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Without compulsion (2 Cor 8:3-4) • Cheerfully (2 Cor 9:7) • Gave to Lord first, then men (2 Cor 8:5) • Excel in grace of giving (2 Cor 8:7) • No command to give (2 Cor 8:8) • Earnestness (2 Cor 8:8) • Like Jesus becoming poor (2 Cor 8:9)

Commonly-Asked Questions

1. Amount (Gross or Net)?

The amount should be proportionate to our income. The Old Testament model of tithing comes from the literal translation of “tithes and heave offerings” which refers to portions lifted off the top of a pile of harvest (provision)—whatever the total—large or small. Taking that first portion was the “first-fruits” concept of giving God the first and best of what is reaped. **The New Testament does not command following the Old Testament tithe system. It prescribes no percentage.** It certainly never defines a baseline in the context of government tax withholding and giving a percentage from gross or net income. **We may ask ourselves this question: “Am I asking about gross or net because I want to give more?”**

Some Christians consider the Old Testament tithe a “recommended minimum” for their giving. Although it might be reasonable for some, it is not prescriptive to all believers. We are free to determine the starting point of our income and to give the Lord as we are able: generously, sacrificially, without compulsion—and as the Spirit leads us.

[Lev 23:10; Lev 27:30,32; Deut 14:22, 25-32; Deut 26:2, Mal 3:10, 1 Cor 16 :2, James 1 :5, 2 Cor 9 :7]

2. From what income sources?

Since all income comes from God’s hand, giving should be based on all sources of income (ie: base wages & salaries, tips, bonuses, commissions, interest & dividends, capital gains). Did this particular income come from my hand or God’s hand? If I believe it came from my hand alone, I should keep it. However, if I believe it came from God’s hand, why would I want to keep His portion?

[Lev 27:30, 32; Deut 14:22]

3. When?

Generally, Christians should give to the Kingdom whenever they receive income. Drawing from two scriptural principles (“first-fruits” and giving as a part of worship), ideally, Christians should give a portion of what they receive at the soonest Sunday worship service. However, advances in technology allowing for web-based gifts or auto drafting are alternatives.

[Lev 23:10-11; Num 15:18-20; Deut 26:1-3; 1 Cor 16 :2]

4. Mandatory or Optional?

Scripture instructs Christians to provide a portion of their income to the Lord. Not doing so is evidence of a lack of faith and actually “robs” God of His own resources. God intended this “giving back” to be a joy and a blessing to us. Even in cases of very low income or financial peril, returning the Lord some measure of income is important. The Lord’s praise for the poor widow in Luke 21 illuminates His heart for those struggling financially—but are willing to trust in God’s provision.

[Lev 27:30,32; Deut 14 :22; Deut 26 :13; Mal 3:6-10; Matt 23:23 ; Luke 21 :1-4 ; 2Cor 8 :8-12; 2 Cor 9 :6-7]

5. Local Church or Parachurch?

The Christian is free to give a portion of his/her giving to Kingdom work and ministries outside the church. However, the church is God’s primary instrument for gathering and perfecting the saints. Therefore, it may be reasonable to limit outside gifts to an amount secondary to that of the local church. **Every member is called to support his/her church financially; we cannot neglect this.**

[Deut 14:27; Deut 26:12-13; Num 18:21-24]

6. What giving is NOT:

- o Paying off God to gain favor or stay "safe"
- o A holy hedge against future financial ruin
- o A way to become righteous or "saved"
- o An investment to guarantee future wealth

To read & meditate on God's Word about giving:

Luke 12: 13-21	Parable of rich fool (warning about greed; self-sufficiency)
Mark 10: 17-23	Rich, young ruler (false god of money)
Matthew 6: 19-21; 24	Treasures in Heaven; serving God & money
Malachi 3: 6-10	Robbing God
Luke 12: 22-34	Why not to worry
Lev 27: 30, 32	Tithing- quick instructions
Deut 14: 22-28	God's original tithing instructions
Deut 26: 1-13	First-fruits giving
Deut 8: 2-18	God's provision
Luke 21: 1-4	Widow's offering
2 Cor 8: 1-12	Generosity encouraged
2 Cor 9: 6-15	Sowing generously
Matt 23: 23	Giving for show
Matt 6:1-4	Giving in secret

Is God really a good provider?

Deuteronomy 8:2-18

2 Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. 3 He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. 4 Your clothes did not wear out and your feet did not swell during these forty years. 5 Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the LORD your God disciplines you.

6 Observe the commands of the LORD your God, walking in his ways and revering him. 7 For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land—a land with streams and pools of water, with springs flowing in the valleys and hills; 8 a land with wheat and barley, vines and fig trees, pomegranates, olive oil and honey; 9 a land where bread will not be scarce and you will lack nothing; a land where the rocks are iron and you can dig copper out of the hills.

10 When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the LORD your God for the good land he has given you. 11 Be careful that you do not forget the LORD your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. 12 Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, 13 and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, 14 then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. 15 He led you through the vast and dreadful desert, that thirsty and waterless land, with its venomous snakes and scorpions. He brought you water out of hard rock. 16 He gave you manna to eat in the desert, something your fathers had never known, to humble and to test you so that in the end it might go well with you. 17 You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." 18 But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today.