

Giving



by
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In the Word of God we have a very precious and important doctrine concerning the giving of our substance to the Lord. By the giving of our substance I am referring to the giving of our financial and material blessing.

This wonderful truth, like so many others in the Bible, has been abused, distorted and brought to reproach by those who would use it to their own gain. It is one that obviously few of God's people understand. Our giving to the Lord is not to be in response to an emotional plea or by a constant hounding or even out of a feeling of guilt. Our motives ought to be love, obedience and faith.

Many have had the idea that our giving is like a lottery. Give a little now and receive the big

payoff later. They call it “seed faith.” Give to God and He'll give you more. This is a selfish, carnal attitude. When we give an offering to the Lord, it should be with the attitude that we are willing to receive absolutely nothing in return. We give because we love Jesus and His Word. We give because the Bible exhorts us to do so. We give because we have faith that what we are supporting is the eternal work of the grace of God.

Am I saying that there is not promise of blessing for those who give? Of course there is blessing in giving, just as there is blessing for obedience to any of God's Word. In ***II Corinthians 9:7*** we read that to the cheerful giver this promise is given, “*And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.*” “All grace,” now that's blessing! In the Old Testament we read of the windows of heaven being opened and blessings being poured out. But our attitude and motive for giving is not to receive. You may say, “If it all works out the same, what's the difference?” God looks at the heart and it's important that He finds love, obedience and faith. Are you willing to give with these motives and not expect anything in return?

How can we give as unto the Lord? One way is to give to our brother in need. This was the occasion in ***chapters 8 and 9 of II Corinthians***. In

Ephesians 4:28 we read of the grace of God that changes a selfish thief into a generous giver to supply the needs of others. In ***I Timothy 6*** Paul exhorts the rich to share their wealth and to be as rich in good works as they are in material wealth. When we minister to the financial and material need of a brother or sister in Christ, we are ministering unto the Lord and He is glorified.

Another way that the Scripture tells us we can and ought to give unto the Lord is by supporting the preaching of the gospel. In ***I Timothy 5:17, 18*** we are told that the laborer who labors in word and doctrine is worthy of reward or of the financial and material support of the ones to whom he ministers. When there is a love for the gospel, the whole council of God, that love produces a sense of responsibility and willingness to support its preaching. This is why many are not faithful to give to the work of the Lord. They feel no responsibility because their love for the Word of God is, for the most part, nonexistent. I believe that the preaching of the cross is the power of God and will some day be openly proven to be so and I find it a great privilege to be able to support it. God doesn't need my money any more than He needs yours, but our obedience and identification with the Word of God is important in determining our place with Christ in eternity.

With so many “ministers” claiming the right to your support, many find it difficult to

know God's will concerning whom they should support. I believe that ***I Thessalonians 5:12, 13*** helps tremendously in understanding God's plan concerning giving. *“And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves.”* To know a minister is to observe his manner of life, his testimony and is to make full proof of his ministry. Such a knowledge is only possible on a local level. It is sad, to say the least, the millions of dollars that have been fleeced from God's people for large salaries, elaborate living, hotels, ect... rather than for the preaching of the gospel which was their pretext. Many support such “ministers” without knowing them in the sense that we are exhorted to in ***I Thessalonians***. From the local assembly, then, individuals can be sent out and supported because they are known of the brethren to be faithful, obedient ministers, evangelists, missionaries or teachers. In this manner the gospel was spread around the world in Paul's day and I believe it's still God's plan.

At the risk of getting myself in hot water, let's look at the idea of fund raising in the name of the Church. ***III John 5 - 8*** tells us plainly that it is the believers' responsibility to support the gospel, not the unsaved. If all God's people were obedient and responsible, there would be a surplus, as there

was when Moses took the offering for the building of the Tabernacle and its furnishings. (*Exodus 36:5 - 7*) But many are not obedient and so the Church feels it must devise other plans to supply its needs. And many times what the church feels it needs is nothing more than the lust of the flesh. They call their plans “fund raising.” Many times it is directed at the money of the ungodly. It's not their responsibility to support the Gospel! And God's people who buy things to raise money for the Church should give without having to receive something for their money. That's why I oppose fund raising in the name of the Church. I prefer to allow God to meet the need in His divine way of providing for His people, who, in turn, in loving obedience, give as unto the Lord.

We, as God's people, need to learn to see the need and then to respond to it. I don't feel it's the pastor's job to hound the saints and to pass the plate until the need is met. Some will not give unless the plate is stuck under their nose to remind them, but God is not glorified by that kind of giving. Our responsibility is to seek God about what He wants us to give on a regular basis, as well as special offerings, and then set it aside and see that that amount gets to its proper destination no matter what. The pastor shouldn't have to come looking for your offering. You should go looking for him.

How much are we to give? Well, without getting into the discussion of whether tithing is a New Testament doctrine or not, I believe that it is obvious that “generous giving” is a New Testament doctrine. *II Corinthians 8:12* makes us to understand that the dollar amount doesn't even enter into the picture with God. What God desires of each one is a willing heart and an amount in accordance to what he has. The widow's mite was a very small offering but it was one that glorified God and expressed her love and faith. At the same time, someone who gives a large offering of \$500 when he could have easily given \$5,000 makes his offering a mockery to God. God is not impressed with dollar amounts but He is pleased when we give willingly and cheerfully in accordance to what we have. Those who are giving all the Lord enables them to, even though the amount may be small, have nothing to be ashamed of. If you don't know where to begin in your giving, I strongly suggest beginning with the giving of a tenth of your income.

One last thought concerning the scriptural principle of giving. Jesus said in *Mathew 6*, that, when giving, our left hand shouldn't know what our right hand is doing. In other words our giving unto the Lord is to be done without man's recognition. If you give a gift and want it made known and public, your gift becomes selfish and

self-glorifying. That of course robs God of His glory and you already have your reward in man's recognition. Some ministers encourage believers to give and to be recognized for their gift by allowing plaques and inscriptions to be placed on different things with the donors name on it. You can have your name inscribed on anything from a brick to a stain glass window, from a pew to an altar. Much money is generated by this motivation. May the Lord protect His people from such unscriptural, carnal giving. “...*He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity...*” ***Romans 12:8.***

Let us give with simplicity or singleness of mind. The word also means to give liberally. Our simple and single purpose in giving ought to be to liberally express our love, obedience and faith.



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