



Biblical Financial Stewardship

Part Three of Three

How much a person should give to charitable causes is a very personal and confidential decision. There are so many organizations that depend on donations to finance their ministries. Clearly, the needs are unlimited but our resources are limited. One would receive a wide variety of answers to the question, “How much should I give?” Fortunately, God’s Word gives us clear direction on this all-important matter of giving.

There is no question or doubt that God desires His children to place a high priority on giving. Jesus told His disciples, “*freely ye have received, freely give.*” (*Matthew 10:8*) The Apostle Paul reminded the Corinthians that “*God loveth a cheerful giver.*” (*2 Corinthians 9:7*) And in Acts, Paul tells the elders of Ephesus that they should, “*remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.*” (*Acts 20:35*)

An attitude of giving is simply a natural consequence of living out the principle that we do not own our possessions – we are stewards of that which God owns and has entrusted us to manage. Perhaps we were accustomed to asking God the question, “Lord, what should I do with my money?” But once we acknowledge that He owns it all, our prayer changes to, “Lord, what should I do with Thy money?” That’s stewardship versus ownership.

1. Attitudes for Giving.

We first need to understand that God’s Word tells us “how” we give is just as important as “how much” we give. Without a proper attitude, our gifts – no matter how large or small – will not bring the intended blessing. And although our motivation for giving can be hidden from men, it is well known to God because His Word is a “*discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*” (*Hebrews 4:12*)

a. Our giving should be done willingly and cheerfully.

“Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.” (*2 Corinthians 9:7*)

The word “grudgingly” in this verse means “with sadness, grief, sorrow, or heaviness.” It describes one who gives with a reluctant attitude, preferring rather to use his gift for personal pleasure. What’s interesting here is that the recipient still receives the blessing of the gift, but the giver’s blessing is reduced.

b. Our giving should be with humility and pure motives.

In order for our giving to receive the greatest blessing, our motivation must be with the purest of intentions. Jesus Himself taught this very important principle:

“Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: that thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.” (*Matthew 6:1-4*)

(Note: the word “alms” in this passage means “acts of compassion or beneficence toward the poor” and is not restricted to just the giving of money.)

The principle can be simply stated as follows: When we give the resources that God has bestowed on us to help others, we can have as our reward either the glory and praise of men or the blessing of God; we cannot have both.

c. Our giving should be a high priority.

In the Old Testament, God instructed His people that the firstfruits of the harvest were to be given to Him: *“The first of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring unto the house of the Lord thy God.” (Exodus 34:26)* This theme is repeated and extended to all our “substance” in Proverbs: *“Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase.” (Proverbs 3:9)* The next verse reveals the blessing that will come from obeying this command: *“So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.”*

Paul gave the Corinthians a simple yet effective method for applying this principle in their daily lives:

“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.” (1 Corinthians 16:2)

Setting a priority on our giving means “taking from the top” instead of “surrendering the leftovers.”

2. How Much to Give.

Even among those who have a heart to give, there is a wide diversity in the answer to the question above.

In the Old Testament, God commanded His people to give a tithe, or ten percent, to the Lord. This was so important that He condemned them for not tithing properly:

“Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.” (Malachi 3:8-9)

The noteworthy characteristic of a tithe is that it is systematic and equitable. Whether an individual has little or great wealth, the tithe results in giving that is proportional to his or her material resources.

The teachings of the New Testament do not command God’s people to tithe. In fact, Jesus used the word “tithe” in rebuking the scribes and Pharisees for their self-righteous acts (see Matthew 23:23). And, when Jesus told the parable of the Pharisee and the publican, the self-righteous Pharisee proudly mentioned his fasting and tithing in his prayer (see Luke 18:12).

What the New Testament does offer are these two recommendations:

- a. Our giving should be in proportion to the material blessings we have received.
- b. Our giving should be done willingly, cheerfully, and sacrificially.

To answer the above question, it is critical that we first be submitted to God and His will for us. We also need to be discerning of God’s leading through the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit. Finally, we need to ask for God’s specific direction in giving and to open the doors that will show us His direction for our giving.

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