

Subject: *Principles of Christian Giving*

Scripture: *1 Corinthians 16:1-4*

It has been said that the most sensitive nerve in the human body is the one between the heart and the wallet. Some think that the subject of money and giving is not very spiritual, but that's not what the Bible says. Paul has just finished the great 15th chapter in which he speaks of the resurrection of Christ and the future resurrection of all believers. How do you follow that? Paul begins this chapter: "Now concerning the collection."

First, I want to show you what Paul is talking about in this passage. He tells the church at Corinth to take up a special collection for the need saints in Jerusalem. He asks them to do the same thing as the churches in Galatia (modern-day Turkey). He tells them when to give, who is to give, where to give, and how much to give. He doesn't want to deal with any collections when he comes to visit them in person. Paul's approach to Christian giving is like that of my mentor and former seminary president, Dr. Gray Allison, who used to say: "Trust the Lord, and tell the people." It is no secret that it takes money to support ministry. Whether you are the apostle Paul, a seminary president, or pastor, it is a fact: ministry requires money.

The Bible teaches us that our giving should be motivated by God's grace. Look at the connection of chapter 15 and 16. We are saved by the Gospel. Jesus died for our sins, was buried, and He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. That's the reason we serve Him (15:58) and that's the reason we give. We find several principles of Christian giving in this passage (the manner, the method, the measure, and the motive of our giving):

THE MANNER OF OUR GIVING

We are to give upon the first day of the week (vs. 2). That's the day of worship because that's when Jesus rose from the dead. Our giving should be regular and consistent, just like our worship. We worship weekly and giving is a part of worship. Some get paid weekly and some get paid bi-weekly or monthly. The point is to be faithful and consistent in our giving. Even when we miss a service due to sickness, vacation, or some other reason, we should either give ahead of time or when we return. Does God meet our needs when we are sick or on vacation? He is faithful to supply our needs and we should be faithful in giving. Our giving should not be based on emotions or feelings. Our giving is based on our commitment to worship and honor the Lord for who He is and all He does.

THE METHOD OF OUR GIVING

We are to give personally (let each one of you) and we are to give to and through the local church (lay by him in store). This word means the treasury. Our forefathers used to call it storehouse giving. As we give our money in worship we acknowledge that we are stewards or managers of all the resources that God has entrusted to us. If we don't give properly, we don't worship properly. All of our giving doesn't have to be through the church, but the primary place of giving is the church to support God's work in the world.

THE MEASURE OF OUR GIVING

The Bible tells us when to give and where to give, but how much are we to give? We are to give as God has prospered us. The Bible teaches that giving is in proportion to what God has given to us, and that will be different for every person and family. The Bible doesn't tell us the exact amount we should give, but it gives us three important principles:

- Minimum giving – tithes (10%)
- Extra giving – offerings (over and above 10%)
- Priority giving – first-fruits, not leftovers

What about tithing? God expects us to give a minimum of 10%. This has always been a principle of giving.

- Tithing commenced with Abraham – Gen. 14:20

Genesis 14:20 *And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.*

- Tithing continued with Jacob – Gen. 28:22

Genesis 28:22 *And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.*

- Tithing was commanded by the Law – Lev. 27:30

Leviticus 27:30 *And all the tithes of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD'S: it is holy unto the LORD.*

- Tithing was commanded by the prophets – Mal. 3:8, 10

Malachi 3:8 *Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.*

Malachi 3:10 *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.*

- Tithing was commended by Jesus – Mt. 23:23

Matthew 23:23 *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.* Jesus condemned the Pharisees for many things, but there was one thing he commended them for, and that was giving tithes of all they had.

Someone may ask, “Doesn’t the New Testament repeal and replace the Old Testament law?” I don’t find that anywhere. What I find is that the New Testament has an even higher standard. The OT says, “Thou shall not kill,” but Jesus taught that if we hate someone in our heart we are guilty of murder. The OT says, “Thou shall not commit adultery,” but Jesus taught if we looked with lust we are guilty of adultery in our heart.

Someone may say, “We’re under grace, not law. We don’t have to tithe anymore.” Any Christian who tries to use grace as a reason to give less than someone under the OT law is a disgrace to grace. If you have a problem with giving 10%, your problem is not with the 10% but with the 100%. You don’t understand that God owns it all and he just loans it to you and

me to use a while. Someone said all money is tainted...taint yours and taint mine. It all belongs to God.

THE MOTIVE FOR OUR GIVING

The Bible tells us when to give and where to give and how much to give and it even tells us why to give. We should never give out of guilt or pressure or to avoid embarrassment. We are not to give grudgingly, but graciously and generously and gladly. We don't give because we have to but because we want to. We have a perfect example of the right motivation in Paul's second letter to the Corinthians. Apparently the believers did not give as Paul had asked, so he brings up the subject again. What did Paul say to motivate them?

2 Corinthians 9:6-7 ⁶ *But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.* ⁷ *Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.*

Our giving should be obedient, generous, joyful, and expectant. We should have some expectations as we give to the Lord through the church:

- We should expect our gifts to be used wisely by the church – Acts 4-6

At first the apostles were in charge of the money (Acts 4-5) and then the deacons were appointed to distribute the gifts to the needy (Acts 6). Leaders are accountable to God and the membership.

- We should expect to honor God by our giving – Prov. 3:9

Proverbs 3:9 *Honor the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase.*

- We should expect God to bless our gifts to further His work

Christian giving is all about honoring God and supporting His work in the world.

- We should expect God to give us more resources to use for Him

Proverbs 22:9 *He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed.* A bountiful eye is one that looks for opportunities to give. It is true...you can't out-give God. John Bunyan described a generous man in *Pilgrim's Progress*: "A man there was, and they called him mad; the more he gave, the more he had." A person known for his charitable giving was asked, "How is it that you give away so much and yet have so much left?" He replied, "I suppose it's like this. I shovel out and God shovels in, and He has a bigger shovel than I have."

Malachi 3:10 *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.*