



New Apostolic Church USA

Reflections on Giving

*And remember the words of the Lord Jesus,
that He said, "It is more blessed to
give than to receive."*

Acts 20:35



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Introduction

Giving allows us to give expression to our passions, interests, and feelings by offering ourselves and our resources to help advance them. As Christians, giving is an integral part of our faith and a vital part of our profession to the world that we are followers of Jesus.

Upon objective examination, we see many factors that have influenced our thinking on this subject. We have gathered our current teachings and beliefs from various sources in both the Old and New Testament. We have also been influenced by culture and customs. While this is bound to happen, it is important that our beliefs are accurate, reflect the truth of the Gospel, and are relevant within our lives today as Christians.

Our church is not alone among the various Christian denominations in struggling to provide clarity. Terms such as giving, offering, and tithing are often used interchangeably with different interpretations of their meanings and significance.

Perhaps the very first issue to address is one of our own current culture, some created by larger societal influences and some by the church itself. For many, the subject of offering is shrouded in mystery, lack of transparency, and discomfort; the proverbial black box, as though the subject of our giving should not be discussed openly by the church or its members. However, Jesus was quite open and forthcoming when discussing the subject of giving. He did not shy away from the topic. He advised the Pharisees to keep their personal giving secret to teach humility and avoid a self-promotional public display, but not because the subject was taboo.

In addition, a subtle but pronounced message has been communicated over time that the church does not need our giving, as though such a mundane thing is beneath its dignity. We should clarify that God does not need our money, but the visible church, the tangible church, a distinctly human institution, requires the financial support of the believers. Jesus intentionally created this institution, charged it with His Mission, and then placed the responsibility for managing it into human hands. He gave His Spirit to lead our decision-making, but not an endowment to fund the Mission. He left that to us.

The institutional and visible church is dependent upon the financial support of the believers to fulfill its Divine purpose found within the Great Commission.

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. (Matthew 28:19-20 NJKV)

As believers grow spirituality and mature in their faith, they gain the understanding that all they have is given by God and belongs to Him. With the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, believers learn to trust in God and recognize how they can use what they have been given to give generously to others to help all people come to know Jesus and fulfill the Great Commission.

Therefore, the purpose of this document is to explore the origins of our present beliefs, clarify assumptions and terminology, and provide a sound and authentic understanding of Christian giving based upon statements of the New Testament.

Let's first look at a biblical history of giving to understand why our current beliefs about it exist.

- Composed by Work Group Giving USA

Giving in the Old Testament

Pre Mosaic Law: Many of our current beliefs stem from the Old Testament. The first reference to offering comes in the account of Cain and Abel in Genesis. Both brought an offering to the Lord from the fruits of their work. God accepted Abel's offering but not Cain's because Abel offered out of faith, as referred to in Hebrews 11:4.

Also in Genesis, we find references to sacrifices offered to God by individuals expressing their thankfulness and seeking God's good pleasure or blessing. These sacrifices often took the form of burnt offerings on an altar made of stones. A more detailed explanation of Old Testament offering and sacrifice, including the various ritual sacrifices, can be found in Section 13.2 of the New Apostolic Catechism.

Lastly, in Genesis we find the first references to tithing, which will become important later within the framework of Mosaic Law. Tithing literally means "a tenth". The first mention of this concept is found in the account of Abraham who won a decisive battle and gave a tenth of the spoils to Melchizedek, the King of Salem and "the priest of God Most High", as an offering of thanks. (Genesis 14: 18-20) In this instance, Abraham does not appear to be following a commandment of God, but makes a singular, voluntary choice. There is no mention of this practice being a regular, ongoing tradition of Abraham.

Likewise, in Genesis 28: 20-22, Jacob makes a vow in response to God's visitation in a dream and promises to give Him a tenth in return for His help.

Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, so that I come back to my father's house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God. And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You." (Genesis 28:20-22 NKJV)

These are the only two references to the term "tithing" or "a tenth" in the Old Testament prior to the advent of Mosaic Law.

Mosaic Law: Now let's look at how the Mosaic law evolved the concept of tithing. Keep in mind that the Mosaic law knows no distinction between a civil society and a religious community. Moses led the Israelites out of captivity and

gave them God's law. Mosaic Law went far beyond the Ten Commandments and many aspects of daily life were codified, including the subject of giving. Giving was required and was based upon the concept of the tithe. Interestingly, many Bible scholars are of the opinion that there was actually more than one tithe required. Specifically, they argue that one tithe each year was collected to support the Levites. Their tribe was not given an inheritance of property within the Promised Land. Instead, their inheritance was the tithe of the other tribes. They did not work the land but received the tithe in exchange for their **priestly service**. One of the important tasks of the priests was to administer the various sacrifices in the tabernacle or later at the temple.

And to the sons of Levi, behold, I have given all the tithe in Israel for an inheritance, in return for their service which they perform, the service of the tent of meeting. And the sons of Israel shall not come near the tent of meeting again, lest they bear sin and die. Only the Levites shall perform the service of the tent of meeting, and they shall bear their iniquity; it shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generations, and among the sons of Israel they shall have no inheritance. For the tithe of the sons of Israel, which they offer as an offering to the Lord, I have given to the Levites for an inheritance; therefore I have said concerning them, "They shall have no inheritance among the sons of Israel." (Numbers 18:21-24 NKJV)

Another tithe, the festival tithe, is described as being a tenth of one's increase, which is earmarked for use in attending the annual festivals ordained by God.

You shall surely tithe all the produce from what you sow, which comes out of the field every year. And you shall eat in the presence of the Lord your God, at the place where He chooses to establish His name, the tithe of your grain, your new wine, your oil, and the first born of your herd and your flock, in order that you may learn to fear the Lord your God always. And if the distance is so great for you that you are not able to bring the tithe, since the place where the Lord your God chooses to set His name is too far away from you when the Lord your God blesses you, then you shall exchange it for money, and bind the money in your hand and go to the place which the Lord your God chooses... Also you shall not neglect the Levite who is in your town, for he has no portion or inheritance among you. (Deuteronomy 14:22-27 NKJV)

Lastly, a third tithe is mentioned. It was to be collected each third year to support the needs of the poor and the stranger.

At the end of every third year you shall bring out all the tithe of your produce in that year, and shall deposit it in your town. And the Levite, because he has no portion or inheritance among you, and the alien, the orphan and the widow who are in your town, shall come and eat and be satisfied, in order that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do. (Deuteronomy 14:28-29 NKJV)

The tithe for the poor and needy was not to be gathered in Jerusalem, but in their local town. The people of the town were to bring a tithe of their crops and herds and gather them together to take care of the stranger, orphan and widow.

The Jewish historian Josephus and other ancient Jewish writers supported the view that these were separate tithes. It may be impossible to determine for certain, but if true, the Jewish people would have been commanded to give at least 20 percent of their harvests and flocks and perhaps as much as 23.3 percent. As new covenant believers, we cannot get caught up and lost in determining the exact amounts that were tithed in the Old Testament. The key is that God's people in the Old Testament were instructed to tithe and they obeyed the law by doing so.

Tobit is an example of a faithful believer who abided by the law given for all the tithes. In Tobit 1:6-8 we can read that Tobit gave his first tenth to the priest, the second tenth he sold so he could visit Jerusalem yearly, and the third tenth he gave to those in need.

In addition to the subject of the tithe, Mosaic Law also mandated that crops be harvested in such a way as to leave a portion of the harvest standing and allow the poor to glean the fields. Think of the account of Ruth and Boaz.

As an example of giving for reasons beyond just fulfilling the law, David made a connection between giving and worship. Psalm 100 reads:

Make a joyful shout to the Lord, all you lands! Serve the Lord with gladness; come before his presence with singing. Know that the Lord, He is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name. For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures to all generations. (Psalm 100)

From this Psalm we learn that when we come before the Lord, we are to bring our hearts and give our offering of praise and thanksgiving. We bless His holy name. Let's recognize that the desire to give is not born out of the desire to fulfill a law, but a desire to worship the greatness of God.

Continuing our look at tithing within Mosaic Law, there is an account in Malachi which has contributed to our thinking and perhaps confusion on this subject. In this account, God is angry because at this specific moment in time, the Israelites were not following the law and the storehouses were running low. Through the prophet, God said:

“You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me, even this whole nation. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this,” says the Lord of hosts, “If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.” (Malachi 3: 9-10 NKJV)

This verse leads some to think that they will be cursed if they do not tithe. It also leads some to think in terms of a prosperity doctrine: if you tithe, you will automatically prosper. The tithe, which is demanded by the king (1 Samuel 8:15-17) or in order to support the Levites and Priests (Numbers 18:25-32), is characterized as a giving for the persons who are working for the king or the temple. The service in return is the work that these persons give to the congregation or the state. In Genesis 14:19-21, the tithe is not only a giving, but an answer on the blessings Abraham received; or in Gen 28:20-22, Jacob pledged the tithe for the upcoming blessings he will receive. Malachi 3:6-12 is almost exactly like that. If the tithe is given entirely, God reacts with blessing. The service in return is the blessing from God. Both of these kinds of tithes should be handled differently.

Question: Is this Malachi verse transferrable to the New Covenant believer or is it limited to its context within the lives of the Old Testament people of God and their laws that supported the Levites and the Temple?

Also in the Mosaic law, the people of Israel were instructed to remember and celebrate what God had done for them by setting aside days to rest, worship, and participate in annual days and weeks of festivals. During these celebrations, the people would bring various types of offerings as prescribed

by the law. They were taught to celebrate with God the blessings He had brought into their lives. Freedom from oppression, their entry into the Promised Land, and success during the harvest, to name a few, were all reasons for the Israelites to give praise and offerings to God. Recognizing that all they had received came from the hand of God, they were to celebrate with Him as a sign of their gratitude. As God had been generous with them, they were to be generous in their giving, in reflection of their feelings toward their God laid out in part of the description of the Feast of the Tabernacles in Leviticus 23:35-41.

As God's people today, we recognize that He continues to provide for us and gives us blessings in our life. When we are aware of what we have been given, we celebrate with God by giving Him praise, thanksgiving, and offering from the blessings we have received. Our God continues to be generous with us and we should in-turn be generous with what we have received.

Turning our attention now to the New Testament - what did Jesus say (or not say) regarding tithing law? Let's now explore the understanding of giving framed within the New Testament.

Giving in the New Testament – A New Way

Jesus' teachings and interactions with people often brought Him into conflict with the Pharisees. In an effort to come back into a relationship with God, they felt strongly that strict adherence to the Mosaic Law was the answer. And of course, Jesus introduced a different path. He was and is the solution path that reconciles mankind with God and fulfills the requirements of the law.

While Jesus spoke often about our relationship with money, He referred specifically to the tithe only once. In Luke 11:42, Jesus is recorded as saying,

“Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of your mint, rue and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God. You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone.” (Luke 11:42 NKJV)

In this conversation, Jesus points out to His Pharisee audience that performing an outward gesture lacks meaning and genuineness when the inward motivation isn't right. The Pharisees were acting according to the strictest interpretation of the law, but were neglecting two basic things that the prophets had warned about: justice and love. (See Isaiah 1:10-17.)

Through this conversation, we see that Jesus introduces a new perspective on the subject of giving. Can we determine that with these words Jesus affirms the tithe and calls it “the former,” which He says should continue and should not be left undone”? And that He goes further but does not define giving in nice, neat percentages?

If Jesus does not define giving in terms of number, then how can we determine what Christian giving is?

Christian Giving

Jesus' teaching is so open-ended and limitless, much like the generosity of God in giving us grace for our sins and life eternal through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. But in removing the limits of the law, we find ourselves in a sometimes uncomfortable place governed not by a finite formula, but by self-responsibility. Our giving is defined by our personal decision to live as Christians. This is Christian giving.

So if not simply the tithe, then what are Christ's expectations of giving for us in real terms? Through His teachings and example, we see these characteristics:

Through His example, we see that a Christian gives beyond the tithe to honor God and to provide others with what they need. Jesus gave beyond the law: He gave everything, including His life, because He loved God and thereby became the embodiment of God's love towards us. It was what God wanted and what we needed.

And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. (Ephesians 5:2 NKJV)

So Christian giving firstly becomes a condition of the heart and reflects a personal discipline of worship. It is a function of our love towards God and each other. By so doing, we fulfill the law; not the law of the temple which was destroyed, but rather the laws of Christ:

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets. (Matthew 22:37–40 NKJV)

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. (John 13:34 NKJV)

Jesus further teaches a poignant lesson about the condition of the heart and God's unique accounting method when describing the Widow's mite. The widow, in the midst of economic uncertainty and vulnerability, gave all that she had because she was thankful to and trusted God. This can be seen as a very treasured gift of love to God.

And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury, and He saw also a certain poor widow putting in two mites. So He said, "Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all; for all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God, but she out of her poverty put in all the livelihood that she had." (Luke 21:1-4 NKJV)

During the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus offered another teaching on the condition of the heart in relation to giving. While opening up the understanding on “you shall not murder” and that despising your brothers puts you in peril with God, Jesus teaches the following: *“Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”* (Matthew 5:23-24 NKJV) This is similar to the conversation He had with the Pharisee about tithing being meaningless without the right heart’s demeanor. Here, Jesus is saying that before you present your gifts to the Lord, take time to reflect and do some self-examination. If you find that something is not right between you and someone else, seek to reconcile that situation so that you may present your offering with a clear heart. Hence, the Gospels teach us that proper disposition of our heart in giving concerns God *and* our fellow man.

In addition, Jesus teaches specific attitudes and actions within parables that connect giving with serving others:

- The Good Samaritan who sees the needs of others and responds with the compassion and love of God.

So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, “Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.” (Luke 10: 34-35 NKJV)

- Within the parable of the sheep and the goats, Jesus provides considerable clarity. Christian giving is more than money. It is also the gift of our time and attention. Note the reward He promises those who give in this manner. It is not human prosperity, but the Kingdom of God.

Then the King will say to those on His right hand, “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.” (Matthew 25:34-36 NKJV)

And lastly, He provides this advice directly:

“Give to everyone who asks of you.” (Luke 6:30 NKJV)

“Freely you have received, freely give.” (Matthew 10:8 NKJV)

“Give and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.” (Luke 6:38 NKJV)

He answered and said to them, “He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise.” (Luke 3:11 NKJV)

We can see from Jesus’ words and stories that giving and serving is an essential part of life because of the needs that exist amongst mankind. The human condition will always necessitate a need for those willing to give and serve. Jesus teaches His followers to be ready to take action when they recognize someone in need. In addition to the teachings and example of Jesus, we can be advised by the New Testament epistles. The apostles build on the foundation of Christ and begin to grapple with administrating the institution of the Church of Christ as it fulfills its Divine purpose. Let’s look specifically at the writings of Paul to dive deeper into the concept of Christian giving.

Apostle Paul’s writings on Christian Giving

Within Paul’s writings, we find the following concepts:

Christian Giving expands the Kingdom of God (Mission): Paul explains that our giving is fundamental to the mission of the church. From our giving, others will recognize the power of God’s love and be introduced to the Gospel of Jesus. When we are willing to offer what we have as gifts to God for the furtherance of the mission, we can be assured that God will care for us.

Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities. Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account. Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable

sacrifice, well pleasing to God. And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:15-19 NKJV)

Christian giving is needed by the church: Then, as now, the Mission of the church involves so many needed activities. Some are rather mundane and routine, like the upkeep of our buildings and the salaries of the administrative staff. Some are easier to be passionate about:

- Teaching our children to love God, to know the Gospel, and to confess Jesus Christ in their lives
- Supporting our youth
- Educating our future church leadership; both ordained and non-ordained, men and women
- Worship and music
- Church construction and renovation
- Community outreach
- Spreading the Gospel both in our local communities and abroad

Referencing 3 John 1:5-8, Chief Apostle Schneider taught that “*God expects the faithful to financially support His servants in their commission.*” We unite ourselves together as Christians when we demonstrate our willingness to share and give to the continuing spread of the Gospel.

Christian giving is needed by those who suffer: In Acts 11:27-30 we can read of the needs of the churches in Jerusalem during a great famine:

And in these days prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul. (Acts 11:27-30 NKJV)

Paul and Barnabas took up the collection among the many congregations to help those in dire need; souls they didn't know. They saw the need to respond

to human suffering as Jesus described also in the parable of the sheep and goats. *For I was hungry...*

In a letter to the Corinthians, Paul comments on the generous response of the Galatians to this emergency. They lived in dire poverty themselves, but insisted upon helping those in need in Jerusalem.

Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. (2 Corinthians 8: 1-4 NKJV)

Christian giving is needed by me: While there is much need within the church and by those who suffer, it can also be said that Christians need the opportunity to give for their own spiritual growth and to share the love of God.

But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have abundance for every good work. As it is written: "He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever." (2 Corinthians 9:6-9 NKJV)

Christian giving is regular: At the beginning of 1 Corinthians 16, Paul directs the believers in Corinth to set aside something on the regular meeting day for the early church. This collection was to be used to help address the specific need for the church in Jerusalem. While this verse does not provide a direct teaching for today's church to give regularly, when we look through the perspective of a world in need, then our giving should be a part of our regular worship and not just a one-time action. Jesus told us that we will never lack the opportunity to care for the poor when he said to His disciples, *"For the poor you have with you always..."* (John 12:8). Since there will always be someone in need of help, giving needs to be a regular part of our life so the church can be continually serving. Our giving and worship are things that are to be thought about seriously and understood, and not just become part of a routine.

Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made. (1 Corinthians 16:1-2 NIV)

Christian giving goes beyond money: We are to offer our time and talents as well. To the Romans, Paul gives this advice:

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. (Romans 12:6-8 NKJV)

Christian Giving is Universal: The question may have arisen “who should give?” and Paul answers in the passage above “*each one of you*”. Just like today, this would have included the widest cross section of humanity: the young and old, men and woman, and the rich and poor.

Christian giving is Proportional: *...should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income* is an instruction to give what we can, based upon our ability. Those with more can give more and those with less can give less. Much attention is rightly directed to the value of the poor Widow's mite, but we should not diminish the incredible generosity of those with greater wealth who also humbly and quietly give out of love for God and a passion for the mission of the church.

Apostle Paul's writings touch on many different aspects of giving. We can see these aspects also reflected in our catechism.

The New Apostolic Church's View on Giving

Our Catechism comprehensively addresses the above points in Section 13.2. Here is the summary of this section.

Offerings and sacrifices bring to expression worship, gratitude, devotion, and submission to God. (13.2)

No other sacrifice can be compared with the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, Jesus' willingness to sacrifice is an example that calls believers to follow Him. (13.2.2)

Willingness to sacrifice springs forth from love. (13.2.3)

Believers also express their gratitude and love for God and His work in concrete gifts, be it in monetary form or in the form of natural produce. (13.2.3)

The willingness to offer and sacrifice is also expressed in congregational life when brethren in faith dedicate a substantial amount of their leisure time, energy, and talents into the service of God and the congregation without compensation. (13.2.3)

The blessing associated with offering can indeed be experienced in earthly matters, but it is primarily of a spiritual nature. (13.2.4)

Beyond what the Catechism says about giving, we can also look to what the Chief Apostle has said.

It is more blessed to give than to receive: In the 2014 Pentecost service, Chief Apostle Schneider shared some thoughts regarding these words of Jesus:

“God is always the giver. He gives without calculation. He gives without expecting anything in return. He gives without stipulating any conditions. The Lord Jesus gave His life for all – without any conditions. He has given us the gift of the Holy Spirit. God is always the One who gives! He gives because He loves us. So that makes our understanding of love a little bit more concrete. So if we truly have love then we also have to be those who give it. We too are to give to others without calculation and without expecting anything in return.

The Lord Jesus' explanation is unmistakable. He was speaking about inviting people to a dinner and said: 'But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind' (Luke 14: 13). There it is again, that thought: those who love give without calculating, without expecting anything in return.

It is a heartfelt concern of mine to give all of us a few words to take along regarding this. It is a special message, one from the Lord Jesus. It is not recorded in the Gospel, but is taken from Acts 20, from a discourse by Paul: 'And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive' (Acts 20: 35).

*We are not talking about moral principles here. What we are talking about here is blessing. Let me apply this: When we give, it brings us closer to God. **That is our blessing: fellowship with God, fellowship with Jesus Christ.** To give without calculation, without expecting anything in return, brings us closer to the Lord Jesus. That is what it is all about! Where the love of God is active we will feel an urge to give because we know: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"*

We can apply this teaching of having a giving nature not only in our congregations with our brothers and sisters, but in our marriages, in raising our children, and in our communities.

Conclusion

Within the truth of the Gospel, Jesus provides a mandate for compassionate and generous giving not limited to a formula. Within the writings of the apostle Paul, we see the foundations of Christ's essence applied to the institution of the church and its mission.

However, in the absence of a direct command to tithe, there seems to be a tendency to give less, not more. Research suggests that most Christians give less than 2-3% of their income and this creates a continual tension within the church. These are realities that were experienced in the first church. They were not avoided or glossed over by either Jesus or the first apostles, but communicated quite openly and directly. If we did the same, what should our message be?

For the believer:

- Tithing is not explicitly commanded in the New Testament, but it is not countermanded either.
- Christian giving is modeled upon the teachings and example of Jesus, as well as the instructions of the first apostles to the young church.
- Jesus emphasized the condition of the heart when giving: worshipful, thankful, humble, compassionate, loving, and generous.
- Jesus exemplified a life of giving out of love for God and compassion for the needs of others. He gave beyond the law. He gave what was needed, even His life.
- Jesus was the human manifestation of God's generosity towards mankind, a limitless gift of His grace. No accounting is possible.
- While there is no law that mandates support for the needs of the temple or the priests, the contemporary Church of Christ has institutional needs born out of the Divine purpose of the Great Commission. They require the ongoing financial support of the believers as described by Apostle Paul and others.

- The believer should recognize and respond to the needs of the church and our neighbor out of a personal recognition of the abundance of God's grace and generosity.
- Our giving includes our time and talents, as well as our treasure (money).
- The believer should recognize that everything comes from God and everything belongs to God. (1 Chronicles 29:10-13) With that in mind, one might ask themselves how much should they keep, instead of how much they should give.

For the church:

- It is important to communicate directly and accurately the concepts of Christian giving as defined by the Gospel of Christ. It is also important to understand the relationship between Old Testament giving concepts such as sacrifice, offering and tithing, and Christian giving. Lastly, it is important to use the terms accurately. This might cause us to reconsider the way we communicate events, like Thanksgiving Sunday, which have their roots in non-Gospel influences.
- The communication of Christian giving should always be directly and transparently linked to the mission of the church.
- The concepts of Christian giving should be integrated within the broader concept of discipleship. Christian giving is more than money: it is our offering of time, spiritual giftedness, and financial support. This unifies our messages: it pulls together Work of Ministry and the call for each follower of Christ to be a healthy member (THRIVE) and to edify the Body of Christ.
- People give more generously when they live out of the abundance of God's grace instead of a sense of scarcity. Therefore, we must teach and preach the grace of God.
- People give out of a sense of gratitude. Help people to experience the abundance of God's grace and develop an attitude of gratitude

- People give in connection with their passions. Every child of God should have one or more passions for ministry. Therefore, discover people's passions and show them ways to support ministries that meet their hopes and visions.
- People give in connection with the purpose of the gift. Our church finances need to be more transparent and the connections made among the giver, the gift, and the ministerial activities of the church.
- When people sense that they belong, that they matter to the community of faith, not just that they are wanted for what they can give financially, they will give and many will give more generously.
- People give when their gifts make a difference. Therefore, the stories of the differences our ministries make in people's lives need to be shared more.

As one who may help members understand the idea of Christian giving, and as members ourselves, we want to internalize what is laid out here so that giving and our reasons for it become a part of who we are as Christians.

Addendum 1

The following inspirational blog describes the expectations and motivations of Christian Giving in a unique way and provides us with further insight:

- **Giving Is Worship:** God made us, sustains us, and lavishes us with good gifts. He loves us and gave His only Son for us. Our response of praise can and should be expressed through giving. The supreme reason to give away our money and possessions, the motive that permeates all other motives, is to worship God. Like a precious cut gem gleaming in the sunlight, every facet of Christian giving should reflect the glory of God's grace. The immediate beneficiaries of Christian giving are earthly, but the One who receives honor from each gift is in Heaven. It is nothing to hoard, to indulge, to beautify ourselves. It is divine to lay down all that we are and all that we have as a tribute at the feet of the King of kings.
- **Giving Is Faith:** Christian giving honors God because it is a tangible expression of complete dependence on Him. God owns all things, and has pledged His support to those who follow Him. His own beloved Son is the guarantee of His goodwill. The one who trusts that God will supply his every need has no fear of becoming generous. In giving away what the world says he needs to survive, he confesses that the source of his security is a good Father in Heaven. In giving away what so easily rules his heart, he renounces the god Mammon, and swears allegiance to the Lord and Giver of life.
- **Giving Is Love:** God gives to some people much more than they need, while He allows others to suffer want. Does He grant wealth solely for the consumption of the rich? No. He means for those who *have* to give to those who have not. He gives to you so *that* you can give to others. In doing this, Christians participate in God's merciful love, which we ourselves have received freely and undeservedly in Christ. *"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you by His poverty might become rich."* If you can see yourself in the poor "if you can see Jesus there," then let your love be genuine. Work hard to meet their needs.
- **Giving Is Mission:** Jesus was on a mission: to expend His life restoring the world to glorious peace with God. One day, finally, in His Kingdom there will be complete wholeness and happiness for God's people in His presence

forever. Until that day, Christians are to adopt their King's mission in this world. This means we don't just give *to* missions, but that Christian giving, in and of itself, *is* the mission to which we are called: to give all that we have for the sake of the Gospel. Jesus Christ gives life to the dead, both spiritually and physically; Christians can imitate him, however humbly, by giving of themselves to the spiritual and physical welfare of others.

- **Giving Is Sacrifice:** Judas sacrificed Jesus for money. Christians sacrifice money and possessions to Christ. A genuine sacrifice is a good, desirable thing being surrendered to God's glory; giving up what is evil is simply obedience. For such an offering to honor God, it must be costly; it has to hurt to lay it on the altar, otherwise the glory of God is not exalted above the preciousness of the gift. The Lamb of God willingly climbed up on the altar, sacrificing His holy life on the cross for us. What would our love to Him be if we did not respond in kind? Christian giving is relinquishing that which is dear to us to Him who is dearest.
- **Giving Is Secret:** Secrecy reveals who you really are, whether you live unto God when no one else knows to applaud or despise. The one who draws attention to his giving is a hypocrite, selfishly seeking acclaim for his ostensible selflessness. The one who loves *God*, who cherishes *His* approbation alone, gives in secret. He does not sabotage himself by allowing others to confuse his motives with their esteem. Rather, he starves his fleshly appetite for recognition, and feeds his spirit with promises of heavenly reward that are assured to him in Christ. His is a quiet gift from his soul to God, which God does not forget.
- **Giving Is Joy:** Christian giving is like a release valve on a life bursting with unstoppable happiness. If your faith is in God, and in the One He sent to ransom you from your sins, then you are welcome to glorious love and everlasting joy in the communion of the Holy Trinity. Nothing can rob you of this. Not poverty or persecution. Not demons or death. So do not let fear of losing happiness paralyze your generosity. Give in order to share life and joy with the weak. You will only increase your participation with the Redeemer in His jubilant triumph over the effects of sin in this world. Besides, God loves a cheerful giver!

Authored by Eric Costa

