



References from *Reflections on Giving* **Giving is love...**

Below please find references that were used in the Giving is love... VISION article, taken from the *Reflections on Giving* paper.

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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)

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)

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)

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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)

- 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)

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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)

Paul and Barnabas took up the collection among the many congregation 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 of 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 is with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. (2 Corinthians 8:1-4)

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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)

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Willingness to sacrifice springs forth from love. (CNAC 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. (CNAC 13.2.3)

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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 have 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.

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- 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.

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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.