



GOD GIVES MOST!

What the Word says about developing my life of giving!

Now this I say, he who sows sparingly shall reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully.

Let each one do just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; For God loves a cheerful giver.

*And God is able to make all grace abound to you, that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed.
Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!*

- 2 Corinthians 9:6-8,15

Our time, our talents, and our treasures!

You have been given a finite amount of time, talents (gifts), and treasures to invest while you live on the earth. Jesus said that “where our treasure is, our heart is also.

”We’d like to inform and encourage you and your household in considering your financial participation in the Gospel. This is a biblical exhortation to obedience in a highly sensitive, grossly misunderstood area of Christ-following. Please prayerfully consider the information to follow and stop to think about the way you are currently handling what God has entrusted to you. Ask Him to give you wisdom and decide today to evaluate and deal with this issue in your household so you may follow God fully: “Being blessed and being a blessing to others” (Malachi 3:10-11).

We live in a culture that is powered by its economic system. If the economic system fails our culture fails as well. The system is based primarily on consuming what is produced at an ever increasing rate. This provides for economic growth and employment opportunities as population increases. While this explanation may be oversimplified and doesn't take other variables into consideration it gives us an idea of the forces working on each one of us. A society of this kind is under constant pressure to spend money and this in turn puts pressure on people to have money with which to consume goods and services.

Behind the scenes of this economic system is a philosophy which relentlessly forces itself upon our minds. A person's life qualitatively consists of the things he or she possesses. We can observe this philosophy being practically followed almost anywhere at anytime.

Facing the issue head on...

Those who know and follow Jesus Christ recognize the conflict immediately. Jesus taught: “not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions” (Luke 12:15). In fact, Jesus goes on to say that we should resist every form of greed and make sure that we are rich toward God (vs. 21)! Jesus also taught that God knows human beings have certain basic physical needs in order to sustain life. His priorities for meeting these needs seem like ridiculous nonsense unless seen from a faith perspective. He tells us that we are to first seek God's kingdom (God's rule and control over our personal lives) and all the basic essentials of life will be added to us (Matthew 6:33). Many Christ-followers put self interest and self goals above Kingdom priorities. The result is that valuable resources are used for self-gratification rather than God glorification. Knowing what problems, perils and challenges await us as we allocate our financial resources, let's be sure that God is acknowledged in all our ways and He will direct our steps (Proverbs 3:5,6).

The Treasure Principle by Randy Alcorn (Lifechange Books) is excellent and is exceptionally helpful as you seek to grow or help others grow in giving. The Treasure Principle?!

“You can't take it with you, but you can send it on ahead!”

The Apostle Paul, writing in the book of Second Corinthians gives clear instruction regarding the proper monetary priorities for a Christ-followers. Follow along as chapters eight and nine outline several timeless principles:

WHY WE GIVE:

- Builds and demonstrates faith (8:7)
- Reminds us of the gift of God's Son (8:9)
- Because it is possible to have too much (8:15)
- Protects from covetousness (9:5)
- Helps to maintain a healthy spiritual focus (9:6-15)

HOW TO GIVE:

- With the abounding grace of God (9:8)
- With abundance of joy despite our circumstances (8:2)
- Not grudgingly or under pressure but with cheer (9:7)
- Beyond our ability to give sacrificially (8:3)

Evaluate your giving heart by using the following checklist. I give...

- With a wholehearted desire to participate in the support of the saints (8:4)
- Without delay and with a resolve to follow through (8:11)
- Liberally, believing that giving brings true wealth and eternal reward (8:2)
- With purposeful planning (8:7-12; 9:7)
- Willingly according to our ability and sincere desire (8:3)
- Secretly in order not to be recognized by men (9:7)
- Responsibly keeping financial dealings above reproach (8:20)
- Honestly with pure motives of love for God and others (8:8,9)
- Prayerfully that our gifts might be effective for the Gospel (9:14)
- Quickly responding to needs that suddenly arise (9:2,3,5)
- Realistically based on what we have, not hope to have (8:12)
- Obediently because of our commitment to Christ and His Gospel (9:13)

These principles will make any Christ-follower an effective part of his church's financial picture. Do these standards match your current giving practices? If not, you are missing out on the blessing of giving as well as the responsibility to support the work of God. God isn't limited by the lack of giving on the part of His people but His Word makes it extremely clear that His plan includes the sacrificial giving to Himself in love and obedience. By doing so we return thanks to God for His indescribable gift!

The Real Issue

Understanding these principles once they are explained is not the difficult part. The real issue is the ways in which we constantly dispose of our income. Many variables are involved here including family background, emotional stability, current impulsive spending habits, current standard of living, expectations current and future, abuse of credit, problems of greed, selfishness, procrastination, immaturity, etc.

The Real Solution

The real solution for dealing with this (as well as most other challenges) is to gain God's perspective and embrace it with your heart. Regardless of circumstance any situation can begin to improve if there is a heart-felt desire to present ourselves to God as a living sacrifice, as we reject worldly principles and allow our minds to be continually renewed (Romans 12:1,2). There will always be a reason not to

follow through on what we know is true. So then, as Paul wrote to Timothy, let us “discipline ourselves for the purpose of godliness” (1 Timothy 4:7).

Three basic areas where giving monies are to go:

Preaching and Teaching the Word: Local church, missions, worldwide, para-church organizations (Navigators, missionary efforts; etc.)

Equity in the Body of Christ: Helping those in temporary difficulty or distress to get back on their feet financially. The result would be that abundance supplies need and then produces equality. Consider this the next time God supplies “extra” to you.

Relief of the Poor: These are people who are truly needy and find it difficult, if not impossible, to adequately provide for their own basic needs. World as well as local organizations meeting basic needs can provide outstanding opportunities to help the poor.

Breaking the Ice in Giving

One of the simplest, yet most effective, ways to break out of the low and no giving syndrome is to start small and gradually increase each time you give. Make it an adventure in faith by asking God to help you make the sacrifices necessary in order to be obedient to Him in this area. Many have even seen their own money situation improve as the result of faith giving. But, here again, don't be so concerned about your own welfare as that of following the Lord Christ. It is the Lord God whom you serve! You can even get your entire household involved in learning how to serve God in this way. There is great opportunity available today to those willing to make eternal spiritual investments.

If you struggle with the area of giving because of lack of faith, poor planning, or mismanagement of your resources, search out experienced and proven men and women to meet with you and accomplish a planning process that can help you set practical and God-pleasing goals for the future!

Do these standards reflect your current giving practices? When is a person supposed to begin to commit his or her resources to God? He isn't limited by the lack of giving on the part of His people but His Word makes it extremely clear that His plan includes sacrificial giving to Himself - in love, obedience, and treasures!

Probably one of the most sweeping giving teachings is in Malachi 3. Look it up and see what you learn!

Thanks to God for His indescribable gift!

THE GOLDEN THREAD

The Word of God has much to say about money, not the least of which is “where your treasure is, there your heart is also.” Here are some central principles and passages regarding money that will help keep you free from the love of money (and lying about it to yourself).

THE CONTENTMENT PRINCIPLE

Every man receives his or her allotment of length of days (time), physical and mental gifts and potential (talents), and financial resources (treasures). The current pressure upon us to be discontent is tremendous. Consider the true meaning of wealth and an eternal perspective on your resources.

THE REALITY PRINCIPLE

Someone has said that “liars will always figure but figures never lie.” It is our observation that many people cannot make wise financial decisions. Few have the belief, the discipline, or the desire to know and face the facts about their financial condition.

Record keeping and data management and monitoring cash flow are key to consistency with money.

THE COVETING PRINCIPLE

It is no coincidence that the words “You shall not covet” were key in the Law of Moses. We must consider the issue of covetousness between ourselves and God. Those who are rich often consume resources and can even be consumed by hoarding. Those who struggle financially many times expend lives trapped in discontent and envy. The solution for the wealthy, the struggling, and the poor is to face the issue of ultimate ownership.

Giving to God is our best hedge against covetousness.

It is our first line of defense toward financial harmony.

THE PRESSURE PRINCIPLE

It doesn't take a genius to formulate strong opinions about our debt-crazed society. We spend billions annually to finance our habits and satisfy our “needs” and pleasures. The incredible pressure exerted by debt controls, colors, and raises havoc with friendships, business relationships, marriages, families, and churches. We must count the cost of debt and weigh the principle against the pressure.

THE STOREHOUSE PRINCIPLE

Is saving biblical? When does saving become hoarding? How can we save when nothing is left over? How can saving help me to develop a good financial picture? What about retirement? These are just a few of the questions that must be addressed within the critical storehouse principle!

THE DISCIPLINE PRINCIPLE

Keeping a budget balanced with income and giving is an art and discipline foreign to many households. We must consider goal-planning and money management and offer an effective and specific approach to overseeing our finances.

