

#82 “Seven Principles for Giving”

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How we handle our finances is important, and it reflects where our hearts and priorities are at. Here are seven Scriptural principles to guide us as we seek to honor God’s command to His church to give of what we have been given.

First of all, our giving should be free. Jesus said in Matthew 10:8, “Freely you received, freely give.” All that we have is from God, and He commands us to give freely. We ought not to expect something in return as if we are looking for approval or honor before men, but simply because we have the privilege of being able to give. And giving is a privilege before God, so we ought to take care that we live in financial balance so that we are able to give as God gives to us. To give freely is to give not expecting or even desiring some temporal personal benefit in return. The joy comes from the act of giving in Jesus’ name, period, because of the joy and glory it brings to Him. The by-product of this selfless attitude is joy and eternal blessing.

Second, giving is to be in secret. Matthew 6:3-4 says, “But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.” We will have had our reward in full if we are seeking to give for the sake of looking good to others. Those who give to be seen by men have forfeited their eternal reward and their joy in exchange for temporal recognition and renown by mere people. Giving in secret keeps others from having a chance to judge us, envy us, compare with us, or applaud us, and we them. Churches need to be mindful of their times of taking in financial gifts that the system does not contribute to judgment, ranking, competition, etc. Others have no business knowing what we give as a family unit to Christ’s work and church, and we have a responsibility not to showcase or flaunt what we give. Neither should we feel embarrassed or worry about being put to shame. *There are few joys on earth as being able to freely give to others without anybody else knowing.*

Third, we are to give according to our ability (Ezra 2:69, Nehemiah 5:8, 2 Corinthians 8:3, 12). We can’t give what we don’t have, and we are not to put our families at risk of not having a home to live in or food to eat. God understands that life costs money. We must meet our debts and expenses so as to keep a good testimony before men. What good does it do to give to a charity and then fail to pay a bill or bounce a check? We do more good for the kingdom by living in balance and following God’s leading over time.

Fourth, there are times that God will move us to give above what we feel able to do (2 Corinthians 8:3). This is not the rule or the norm (see point #3), but there are instances where God will call us to give in such a way that really requires faith on our parts. This is one of God’s ways to cause us to experience growth in Christ through an increasing need to rely upon Him in faith. If this is the case, God will make it clear.

Fifth, we will reap in proportion to that which we sow. 2 Corinthians 9:6 says, “Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.” In other words, those who give generously will themselves be given back to generously by God. No one can say exactly how God will repay a person’s generosity or exactly when it will happen, so we must beware of any who claim to know the mind of God in regard to our finances. God honors those who give to His work bountifully, abundantly, and generously. *Generosity within our ability is a sacrifice that leads to great joy and reward.*

Sixth, we are not to give out of duty and against our will but cheerfully. 2

Corinthians 9:7 says that our giving is not to be done “grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” God wants giving to be a happy experience, not a drudgery or mere requirement. The giver is not trying to satisfy the harsh expectations of a deity, nor is he supposed to be giving begrudgingly and against his will. Giving is a “want to” thing. God moves in a person to give joyfully and cheerfully. The word for cheerful could also mean “prompt or ready to act.” *In other words, a cheerful giver is both a joyful giver and an eager giver, ready, willing, desiring, and prepared to give.*

Seventh, we give as the Lord leads us individually. 2 Corinthians 9:7 says, “Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart.” We are not to give because our pastor motivated us by giving us a guilt trip about tithing. We are not to give so that we can get God off our backs or to earn His favor. Rather, we are to give because we want to give and because we believe that God would be honored by our giving. If we are not purposing in our hearts to give or if we find that we have no desire to give, we had better ask the Lord why these things are the case. It is one thing to be unsure about a church or a ministry and be hesitant to give to it. It is another thing to be hesitant to give altogether. The important thing is that we are faithful and willing to give where and to the extent that God leads us to give.

Giving is an indescribable gift in and of itself (2 Corinthians 9:15). The world cannot understand this as they do not enjoy giving for the most part; they enjoy getting. The Christian’s way is backwards, getting much more joy out of giving than receiving. Jesus Himself said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). Thus, in giving we truly receive.