

Four Principles of Giving

Principle #1 We Give because it is our Christian Responsibility

Giving is a part of our responsibility because it is how God provides for human needs. Our giving is an extension of his generosity. The Apostle Paul anchors our giving in the fact that God gives to us. He writes, “And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.”¹ The specific “grace” he is referring to in the context of the chapter is financial provision. God provides for our physical needs so that we give to the needs of others. God’s provision comes in many ways and one of the ways God provides is through the generosity of his people. He expects us to give because it is a part of how God provides for human needs.²

Giving is a part of our responsibility because there is an obligation to care for those who do the work of the ministry. The Apostle Paul writes that those who labor in the ministry are owed a wage.³ We receive spiritual blessing from those who labor in the word and it is good to compensate them for their labor.

¹ 2 Corinthians 9:8

² 2 Corinthians 9:12–13

12 For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. 13 By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others,

Ephesians 4:28

28 Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

³ 1 Corinthians 9:8–12

8 Do I say these things on human authority? Does not the Law say the same? 9 For it is written in the Law of Moses, “You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain.” Is it for oxen that God is concerned? 10 Does he not certainly speak for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop. 11 If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? 12 If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we even more? Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ.

1 Timothy 5:17–18

17 Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. 18 For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,” and, “The laborer deserves his wages.”

Principle #2 We Give From a Willing Heart

God desires the collection of money be done with a willing heart and not under compulsion. The church should seek to cultivate hearts that desire to give out of joy and not reluctantly. A Christian's responsibility is not dissolved simply because they don't feel like giving. Rather, God desires to see hearts that give joyfully. This highlights our responsibility as individuals and as a community to stir our affections toward giving. We have a duty to give and a part of our duty is to give from a sincere heart.⁴ One of the ways we cultivate a joyful and willing heart is by understanding that giving is a blessing.⁵ It is a blessing to see the joy and thanksgiving which overflows to God because we have helped supply someone's need. It is a blessing to be a part of building the kingdom of God. Paul's last words to the elders at Ephesus were concerning the blessing that comes from giving. He reminds them that Jesus taught, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."⁶

Principle #3 Giving is an Act of Worship

One of the ways we worship is through giving. The Apostle Paul writes, "to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship."⁷ Paul establishes that all of our lives are to be presented to God as worship. He goes on to say that one of the ways we worship is to use the gifts that God has given to us. One of those gifts is giving

⁴ 2 Corinthians 9:7

⁷ Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

Exodus 25:1-2

25 The Lord said to Moses, 2 "Speak to the people of Israel, that they take for me a contribution. From every man whose heart moves him you shall receive the contribution for me.

⁵ 2 Corinthians 9:11

11 You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God.

⁶ Acts 20:35

⁷ Romans 12:1

financially. It is true that we do not all share the same spiritual gifts but each of us is to serve according to what we have received.⁸

Principle #4 Giving is a Spiritual Discipline

We don't just give to pay the bills. Giving is an act of self denial. It fights the flesh's propensity to be selfish and greedy.⁹ Giving is one of the ways we take aim at covetousness which is idolatry.¹⁰

⁸ Romans 12:4–8

4 For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, 5 so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. 6 Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; 7 if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; 8 the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

⁹ Ephesians 4:28

28 Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

¹⁰ Colossians 3:5

5 Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.