

Generous Giving

Jed N. Snyder- 1 Corinthians 16:1-4;¹

To teach generous giving as a blessing for the believer in obedient response to the Lordship of Jesus Christ so that the Lord's people may be blessed and by their giving may bless the lives of many others around the world.

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Introduction:

Several Sundays ago I spoke on the general principle of stewardship from Matthew 6. We were reminded that all we are and have is on loan to us from the King. He rightly expects a return from his investment. If our hearts are right and He is Lord of our lives then He will be honored by the way we give.

Today we want to bring the more specific teachings of Scripture to bear upon our lives so that we may be in a place where God can bless us and use us for His glory and the ministry of the kingdom, his church around the world.

The foundational issue is that of the Lordship of Jesus in all. I heard of a 10 year old boy who was given ten shiny silver dollars by his uncle for his tenth birthday. He was very excited by the gift and began spreading them out and deciding how he would use them. The first one he set aside and said that it was for the Lord. He then mentioned to his mother how he was going to use the next eight coins. When he came to the tenth coin, he said that it was for the Lord. His mother reminded him that he had already set one aside for the Lord. His response was, "Yes, that one I owed to the Lord, it was really His. This one I want to give Him as my gift for Him." No matter how you or I feel about the tithe (which means a tenth) this young boy's attitude was refreshing. He loved Jesus so much that he wanted to give Him his due and another gift beside.

It is clear from this passage that this offering was for the relief of the saints in Jerusalem. It was a widespread offering being received among the Gentile churches and passed along to the church in Jerusalem which was primarily Jewish. Economic conditions in Jerusalem were hard

¹ Quotations are from *The Holy Bible*, English Standard Version. Copyright 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. While the author appreciates that there are many good translations of The Holy Bible, he prefers this version.

probably due to persecution or a famine or both.

The word for offering used was one that often implied giving beyond the tithes and offerings that seemed to be expected from believers. This seems to be a teaching that goes to the heart of Christian giving. The issue is providing for the needs of others as the Lord has prospered each one.

This passage and corollary teaching point us to three important matters...

- I. The Focus of Giving 1 Corinthians 16: 1
- II. The Fundamental Procedures 1 Corinthians 16: 2
- III. The Fiscal Appropriateness 1 Corinthians 16:3-4

I. The Focus of Giving 1 Corinthians 16:1

A. The Saints - God's people

This is not an unusual focus. God is interested in people. Buildings, organs, property, equipment, etc. all are of relatively little importance in comparison to people.

In the early church (see Acts 4:34-35) all were cared for. This should be true among the saints today.

Paul commends the believers at Philippi for caring for his needs (see Philippians 4:14-19). He spoke favorably of the Macedonians who gave out of their poverty (2 Corinthians 8:1-5). And he commended the Corinthians because their giving created expressions of thanks to God (2 Corinthians 9:12)

B. The Savior - God's provision

Remember the words of Jesus in Matthew 25:37ff. What was done for the least of God's children was done for Jesus.

It is not that God needs anything from us, nor that we can gain favor with God by way of giving to Him. But our lives are enriched and He always out-gives the giver who in love shares with Christ by sharing with others.

As we give generously and cheerfully God is honored. God will be praised. True Christian giving focuses attention on God thru Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 9:13-15).

Giving to God and God's church (people) are what Christian giving focuses upon.

Dr. Alan Redpath² (Redpath,) tells this story

“A certain Christian once said to a friend. ‘Our church costs too much. They are always asking for money.’ Her friend replied in this fashion: ‘Some time ago a little boy was born into our home. He cost us a lot of money from the very beginning: he had a big appetite, he needed clothes, medicine, toys and even a puppy. Then he went to school, and that cost a lot more; later he went to college, then he began dating, and that cost a small fortune! But in his senior year in college he died, and since the funeral he hasn't cost us a penny. Now which situation do you think we would rather have?’ After a significant pause, the friend continued, ‘As long as this church lives it will cost. When it dies for want of support it won't cost us anything. A living church has the most vital message for all the world today. Therefore I am going to give and pray with everything I have to keep our church alive.’”

II. The Fundamental Procedures 1 Corinthians 16:2

First, the general observation that everyone is to be involved in the giving. Like loving, and witnessing, God gives grace to all to give. This giving is required if the Christian is to live obediently and therefore really be blessed of God. Let the Scriptures teach us several important

² Redpath, Alan. *The Royal Route to Heaven*, Westwood, N. J., Revel, 1960.

details so we can receive the full measure of God's blessings.

“Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” 2 Corinthians 9:7

A. Sequential giving - on the first day of the week. This is not so much legalism as learning a good habit and allowing that habit to have a regular part in the life of the dedicated believer. If the income arrives at bi-monthly or even monthly intervals then a portion should be given as it is received.

B. Systematic giving - set aside a sum of money. This indicates forethought, planning, and wise consideration of the expenditure of other monies so that this setting aside can take place.

There is no clear NT teaching that we ‘owe’ God a tenth or our income. The Bible often speaks of tithes not just a tithe. The Mosaic Law actually required about 23 percent, not only one tithe. The NT passages that speak of the tithe do so in some places as a rebuke to those who gave only their tithes but not their hearts. Generous systematic giving will in many cases be much more than a tenth. In some cases it may be less than a tenth. The emphasis is only private generous systematic giving as unto the Lord out of a cheerful heart.

There should also be thinking concerning the will of the believer so that the state does not decide the stewardship of the believer's life saving according to their secular designs.

C. Sacrificial giving - in keeping with his income. We used the motto, "equal sacrifice not equal gifts" when we were building the Educational Building and purchasing and renovating the Barnwell House. This may be an appropriate idea for us all the time. Someone said, "Be careful that your giving be in keeping with your income, lest God make your income in keeping with your giving." Proportionate giving is the issue. A

wealthier person generally will be able to give not only a greater amount but also a greater proportion. If one gives 10% of \$10,000, he has \$9,000 left. If one gives 10% of \$100,000, he has \$90,000 left.

Dr. Stephen Olford³ (Olford,) quotes Dr. Roy Laurin...

"(he) tells of a Christian businessman who was traveling in Korea. In a field by the side of the road was a young man pulling a rude plow while an old man held the handles. The businessman was amused and took a snapshot of the scene. 'That is curious! I suppose these people are very poor,' he said to the missionary who was interpreter and guide to the party. 'Yes,' was the quiet reply, 'those two men happen to be Christians. When their church was being built, they were eager to give something toward it; but they had no money. So they decided to sell their one and only ox and give the proceeds to the church. This spring they are pulling the plow themselves.' The businessman was silent for some moments. Then he said, 'That must have been real sacrifice.' 'They did not call it that,' said the missionary. 'They rather thought it was fortunate that they had an ox to sell.' Needless to say, the businessman was silent. When he reached home, however, he took the picture to his pastor and told him all about it. Then he added, 'I want to double my giving to the church, and do some plow work. Up until now I have never given God anything that involved real sacrifice.'"

D. Satisfying - so that when I come no collection will have to be made (for the Jerusalem church).

When we do what is right before God we have an inner sense of goodness and fulfillment. It is even more so if by pleasing God we can also please God's anointed leader. Paul wanted to be pleased when he arrived in Corinth and thereby add to the joy of the believers there. One very important question we should ask about our giving. "Is God pleased?"

³ Olford, Stephen. *The Grace of Giving*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1972.

III. The Fiscal Appropriateness 1 Corinthians 16:3-4

A. Supervised by godly men

We can remember the first church problems that related to the distribution of supplies. There the apostles set the pattern by calling for the church to select men who were filled with the Holy Spirit and wisdom. Monetary issues need just as godly men as do the other issues of church life. Money requires men with differing gifts, but just as godly and just as full of wisdom. Many Christian organizations have gone astray spiritually because they selected businessmen because of their expertise in business rather than their godly character to handle the books and control the flow of money.

B. Sanctioned for good use.

1. Honest before men

Paul was careful to use the funds collected for the purpose for which they were solicited. There have often been misrepresentations of the use for which funds were given. I don't have time to go into overhead costs, the juggling of funds and personal salaries that can be excessive. But if we select godly men to supervise the funds, then we can be totally honest before men.

2. Honorable to God

Paul considered traveling with the party that would deliver the gift to the saints in Jerusalem. But Paul was always concerned that he did what was right before the Lord. He wanted the matter of finances to please the Lord in the manner in which they were handled corporately. There is just as much responsibility for the body to handle its funds in a manner pleasing to the Lord as

it is for each of us personally to handle our funds properly.

Conclusion:

It is my desire that you be fully blessed by God. He can only do so as you learn to give to Him cheerfully and generously. As you think of what that means remember the words of this anonymous poem quoted by Stephen Olford⁴.

Supposing today were your last day on earth,
The last mile of the journey you've trod.
After all of your struggles, how much are you worth?
How much could you take home to God?

Don't count possessions, your silver and gold,
For tomorrow you leave them behind;
And all that is yours to have and to hold
Are the blessings you've given mankind.

Just what have you done as you've journeyed along--
That was really and truly worthwhile?
Do you feel you've done good and returned it for wrong?
Could you look o'er your life with a smile?

⁴ Ibid.