

10 PRINCIPLES *for* CHRISTIAN GIVING

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Christians know they should give to the Church, but they may be unsure of why, how, or how much. We need to seek God's answers to these questions in His Word.

When we understand the Bible's principles for Christian giving, we can evaluate whether our giving conforms to the teaching of Scripture.

First, I would encourage you to read the following passages in the Word of God itself:

- ♥ Matthew 6:1–4;
- ♥ 1 Corinthians 16:1–2;
- ♥ 2 Corinthians 8:9–15; and
- ♥ 2 Corinthians 9:6–7

In these four New Testament passages, we find at least **ten principles for Christian giving**:

1 | The Lord Jesus requires us to give.

Jesus said to His disciples in Matthew 6:2, “when you give” not “if you give”!

Hence, Christian giving is not optional; it’s essential. We often hear folks say: “In the Old Testament they had to give, but not in the New—now we only give if we want to.”

This is clearly not Jesus’ teaching. He expected all His followers to be givers. Christians will give.

Are you giving?

2 | The Lord Jesus wants us to give for the right reasons.

Jesus warned His disciples not to give for the sake of being admired by men: “Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them” (Matt. 6:1).

When we give, we must be careful to examine our motives. We ought to give for the glory of God and the good of His people. We must desire His approval of our giving rather than the admiration of people.

Are you giving for God’s praise or man’s?

3 | The Lord Jesus wants us to practice charitable giving.

Jesus said, “When you give to the poor” (Matt. 6:2). Jesus is specifically teaching about “alms” in this passage: aid, charity, or benevolent offerings for the needy.

This is why charitable giving is a very important part of our Church budget. We are corporately committed to obeying this mandate from the Lord.

Do you give enough for the Church to be generous in charitable giving?

4 | The Lord Jesus reminds us that our giving is ultimately to our all-seeing heavenly Father.

Jesus said, “When you give . . . your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you” (Matt. 6:3–4). When we give, we are not simply adding to the Church budget; we are giving a thank offering to the Father Himself. Thus, we must give “as unto the Lord” (Col. 3:23). Our ultimate goal in giving is to please Him.

Are you aware that your giving is to the Lord?

5 | The Bible teaches that Christian giving is an act of worship.

Paul teaches the Corinthians that taking up the collection is an act of worship which should be a part of their regular Lord's Day worship: "On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save" (1 Cor. 16:2).

When we put our money in the plate, we are worshiping Almighty God in accordance with His Word. Note well, Paul is speaking here of a "collection for the saints"—this is giving by the Church, to the Church, for the Church.

Do you realize that giving is a part of worship?

Is your worship in this area abundant or inhibited?

6 | The Bible teaches that Christian giving should be done in light of the incarnation.

Many Christians argue about whether the tithe (10 percent of our income) is still the standard for giving to the Church. Disputants usually want to show that less than 10 percent is fine. Paul scuttles the whole debate in one verse. He says: "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 through His poverty might become rich" (2 Cor. 8:9).

Christ's self-giving is now the standard for our giving! We begin from the base of the tithe and then aim to emulate His self-sacrifice. Our giving is to be inspired and instructed by Christ's inexpressible gift.

In light of such a challenge, who could possibly be satisfied with asking, "How little a percentage is acceptable for me to give?"

Is your giving inspired by Christ's sacrifice?

7 | The Bible teaches that Christian giving should be done in accordance with our means.

Paul is quite clear on this: "For if the readiness is present, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have" (2 Cor. 8:12).

Put another way, Paul is saying you should give in proportion to what God has given you. He said it this way in 1 Corinthians 16:2, "Each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper."

This means at least two things:

- Since we are all supposed to give proportionately, those who have more money are expected to give more (we who are particularly blessed materially must remember this), and
- The Lord never asks us to give what we do not have or contribute beyond our means.

Are you giving in proportion to your means?

8 | The Bible teaches that the liberality of God's blessings to us is connected to the liberality of our Christian giving.

Though it may seem strange, both Jesus and Paul emphasize that there is a relation between our giving to the Lord and the Lord's giving to us. As Paul says, "He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully" (2 Cor. 9:6).

Are you sowing bountifully?

9 | The Bible teaches that Christian giving must be willing and free.

We learn in 2 Corinthians 9:7 that “each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion.” But doesn’t this contradict what we learned under the first principle, that Christian giving is not optional? The answer, of course, is no. True Christian giving is both mandatory and voluntary. It is required by God, but it is always willingly given by the believer.

Is your giving willing?

10 | The Bible teaches that Christian giving ought to be cheerful.

As Paul says, “God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:7). This is a truly amazing assertion. Paul assures us here that the Lord takes a special delight in those who are joyful, energetic, and merry givers.

Are you a cheerful giver?