

GIVING TO THE WORK OF THE LORD

1 Introduction

The whole bible addresses the matter of giving in kind or cash. God clearly positions himself as Creator and owner of all things. "I am the Lord, who has made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself...(Isaiah 44:24 NIV). The bible clearly states that "The earth belongs to the Lord and the fullness thereof."

Everything we have, whatever we work with and whatever we receive already belongs to the Lord. We are only entrusted to manage certain aspects of it to one degree or another. In the story of the talents (Matt 25: 14-30), one employee was entrusted with five portions of money, the other with two and the last with one. The successful management of these monies was praised by the Master.

Now the big question – what portion does God allow for us to use and enjoy? The question is not really how much we should give to God.

From the earliest days of the Christian church, they responded in the area of giving. From the day of Pentecost the Christians learnt the principles of giving. This is sketched for us in Acts 2: 43-47. There is no hint of insignificant gifts, but rather of generous giving – almost to the extreme.

2. Tithing – The Basic Unit

The basic principle throughout the Scriptures is that of God claiming that 1/10 of our income or produce belongs to Him. He allows us to retain 9/10's for our own personal living expenses.

The question is asked in Malachi 3:8 "Will a man rob God?" The expected answer is no – we will not rob God; or even another question – "How can a person possibly rob God?" Verse 8 goes on to say that "...Yet you rob Me." But you say "How are we robbing you?" The incredible answer to the people was "You are robbing Me in that you withheld what belongs to Me – your tithes and offerings" (my words). Right at the end of the Old Testament and at the beginning of the New Testament we have this clear statement.

Tithing was practiced before the law of Moses and is, therefore, a creation principle and not a law of Israel. Hebrews 7: 1-10 explains this clearly to us. Tithing was then carried out as a creation principle of God.

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With the advent of the New Testament the creation principle of the tithe continues. Jesus approved of this when He saw the people and the widow putting their tithes into the treasury. 1 Corinthians 9: 4-14 gives an explanation of how giving would take place within the church and the employees of that church would be paid out of that giving.

3. Gifts and Thank Offerings

The bible goes on to show how many people discover that they are so blessed with their 9/10 that, in fact, they have excess. These people give gifts and make offerings of thanks. 2 Corinthians 8: 1-5 is a clear example of this.

Some of these gifts were given to specific needs (1 Corinthians 16: 2-3) and other gifts to people serving the Lord (Philippians 4: 10-17), while others just made their gifts to the work of the Lord through the church of Jesus Christ (Acts 4: 36-37)

4. The Spiritual Gift of Giving

A select group of people in the life of the church enjoy another dimension of giving altogether. After tithes and gifts, they have the means and Holy Spirit inspired desire to give. Romans 12: 8 mentions this person among the spiritual gifts, "...He who contributes, let him give liberally, and he who gives aid, let him do it zealously."

This person becomes a channel from the marketplace or the field of produce to the church of Jesus Christ. Like veins, they feed the church of Jesus with resources and seem to enjoy greater and greater blessing within themselves and in their business ventures.

Barnabas was such a man (Acts 4: 36-37). These people can identify fully with 2 Corinthians 9: 6-13, especially verse 10. "Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness."

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5. Faith Giving

In this situation the person does not calculate percentages or respond to needs, but simply asks God, “What should I give to this cause?” The answers they receive is what they act upon, regardless of whether they understand or have the resources available. The whole of Hebrews 11 illustrates this aspect of giving and service. The key verse is verse 6, “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” These people just know that their giving is pleasing to God.

6. Where to Give What and When

The tithe unit is generally linked to its entirety to the house of God. Malachi 3: 10, “Bring the full tithes into the storehouses so that there may be food enough in My house...” In the case of the widow’s mite, all the tithes were being placed in the temple treasury. With Abraham and Melchizedek there was no dividing up of the tithe, but a full tithe was given. There is never an indication in scripture that any tithe is broken up into smaller units for distribution to several places.

Gifts may be given to the house of the Lord, people, special needs, etc. The same applies to the gift of giving and faith giving. But again, thank offerings are nearly always associated with the house of Worship.

Calculations – what is my tithe a tithe of? Of my gross earnings before tax, after tax, my living expenses, etc? The bible gives us the gracious freedom to decide, as we read in 2 Corinthians 9: 6-13. Time will prove to us that God is more faithful to provide and supply all our needs than we ever realised. The principle is laid down in verse 6. “He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.” This is also one of the very few places in the bible where God invites us to put Him to the test (Malachi 3: 10)

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7. Conclusion

You cannot escape the fact that giving is right there in the heart of the bible. but God is more concerned about the giver than He is about the gift. “But first they gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God.” (2 Corinthians 8: 5)

Giving is also in the heart of God. He gave us the world and then He gave us His son, Jesus Christ. “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)

From an article by MH Pohlmann M.A.

Other verses of interest on this subject:

Matthew 6:19-24

Matthew 19:21-24

Mark 10:21-25

Mark 12:41-44

Luke 6:43-45

Luke 19:11-27

Luke 21:1-4