
Christian Giving

The Bible shows God's viewpoint on the subject of money and Christian giving and provides teaching that will protect the believer from many common illusions and dangers.

A false notion about money is that money will buy happiness. Only the word of God brings happiness as the believer learns and applies Bible truth to his life. Another false viewpoint is that money is security; but the only true security is in the Lord Jesus Christ and it is only wishful thinking to seek security in any other place. Then there is the hippie mentality which says that money is not needed, leading to people borrowing money through life. Money is a bona fide medium of exchange and the Bible provides many instructions on the handling of money.

The Bible points out several dangerous errors to which non Christians are subject. Evangelistic teaching should deal with these important issues to help unbelievers see the true issue of salvation through Christ. For example:

- Salvation cannot be purchased with money. (Mark 8:36-37) Salvation has been paid for and not with silver and gold. (1 Pet. 18, 19)
- Money causes a rich person to put his faith in the wrong things. (Mark 10:23-25)
- Money keeps the rich unbeliever from seeking salvation in the right manner which is by means of God's word. (Luke 16:19-31)
- Money has no credit with God at the last judgment. Only imputed righteousness is acceptable with God. (Prov. 11:4, 28)

The Christian can also fall into error in money matters. Thorough Christian life teaching includes the following:

- Money can keep a believer from honoring Christ, the purpose for which he has been left on this earth (Eccl. 5:10-20; 6:2). Solomon was a rich king, but his riches crowded the Lord out.

- Money can be a source of temptation. (1 Tim. 6:7-19)
- A believer should spend his money wisely. (1 Tim. 6:8) Investigate carefully before you give. Give money for the glory of the Lord.
- Two other passages of interest are James 4:13 to 5:6 and Acts 5:1-10.

Christian giving is a part of stewardship and faithfulness is the first requirement. (1 Cor. 4:2) God really owns everything and gives to believers (James 1:17). A Christian is accountable for everything that the Lord provides (Rom. 14:12).

Christian giving expresses the principle of grace. It is one means by which the Christian demonstrates graciousness. Having been a recipient of God's grace in salvation and in the Christian life, the Christian ministers grace to others. He is a conduit of grace. "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts 20:35b)

The principle of giving derives from the fact that grace depends upon the character of the giver. A Christian gives because of who and what he is, not because the needy person deserves it. Often the needy person is quite undeserving; but deserving is not the issue in giving. The issue in giving is the believer's stability of character. The recipient is the object of grace, not the object lesson of grace.

The giver is the object lesson of grace. The more frequently a believer gives, the more he is oriented to grace, and the more grace is observed in him. It is vitally important, therefore, that the mental attitude for giving be correct, especially that the giving is not motivated by the desire for approbation. This will destroy the object lesson and devalue God's grace in the eyes of observers. In giving, nothing must cloud the issue for either the giver, the recipient, or observers.

The Biblical standard excludes human religion and systems. Legalistic giving as seen in Amos 4:4 is replaced by the faith giving of Prov. 11:24.

Neglect of the needy (Mal. 3:7-12) is replaced by giving more than is needed (Ex. 36:5-7). The Pharisaism of Luke 18:9-14 is replaced by giving secretly and before the evangelism event (1 Cor. 16:1ff). Bribery and public testimonies (Gen. 28:20-22) are replaced by freewill offerings (Ex. 25:1, 2; 35:4-10; 2 Cor. 9:7).

Covetousness is an occupational hazard to be guarded against. (Luke 12:15; Col. 3:5) Thirteen of the twenty-nine parables of Jesus referred to the correct use of possessions. Giving will involve first giving yourself to the Lord. (2 Cor. 8:5)

Poverty is no excuse for not giving. Believers should not have to be urged to give, because Jesus gave Himself. We give in gratitude, cheerfully, willingly and in grace. Read 1 Cor. 6:19-20; 2 Cor. 8:1-15.

The amount you give should be determined according to the following criteria:

- By the need, 2 Cor. 8 and 9
- By how much wealth you have, 2 Cor. 8:12-15; and by how much God prospers you, 1 Cor. 16:2, Deut. 16:17; Matt. 10:8; Acts 11:29.
- Giving is to be systematic (1 Cor. 16:2) and sacrificial (Luke 21:3, 4; 2 Cor. 8:2)

Tithing is not the issue in Christian giving. Tithing was a tax to support the theocratic government during the age of the Jews. The Old Testament gives a systematic progression in the use of the tithe.

- Tithes were given to the Levites to maintain the temple (Num. 18:21-24) and to provide for the official feasts and sacrifices (Deut. 14:22-24).
- The Jews gave all the tithe of their produce every third year for the Levite, non Jew, orphan and widow in your town in Israel (Deut. 14:28, 29)
- Other tithes mentioned in Num. 28:26ff and Gen. 47:24. Melchizedek's tithe from the spoils of Abraham's war is part of the illustration of the teaching of the superior priesthood of Christ (Heb. 7).

An example of correct Christian giving is given by the apostle Paul in his description of the giving done by the Macedonian believers, 2 Cor. 8:1-6. The Macedonians were born again, believer priests and had the right to give. They had been robbed blind by the Romans in order to pay for putting down a revolt, but they still gave. Paul wanted the Corinthians and us to know of the grace of God which was bestowed upon the churches of Macedonia. The reward from God is from grace and is invaluable, 2 Cor. 9:6; Matt. 6:20; Prov. 22:9.

PRINCIPLES OF CHRISTIAN GIVING FROM 2 CORINTHIANS 8 AND 9.

Read these two chapters and consider the following observations.

- 8:1, 2 All true giving is defined as mental attitude, not as an overt act.
- 8:3 Christian giving must be free from pressure and coercion. Free will or volition must operate.
- 8:4 The believers considered it a privilege to give. They are not begged to give. Giving under pressure contradicts grace.
- 8:5 They were in fellowship before they gave. Giving starts with self and not with money.
- 8:6 Titus was urged by the apostle Paul to to complete in the Corinthian church the grace based work.
- 8:7 Giving is part of grace.
- 8:8 Christian giving is love giving not law giving.
- 8:9 As Jesus Christ voluntarily gave Himself, we in giving must have the same attitude of volition, willingness.
- 8:10 Starting to give one year ago and continuing with a desire to give.
- 8:11 Giving is in accordance with what you have not in accordance with what you hope to get in the future.
- 8:12 Even if a believer has nothing to give, it is fully accepted by God, provided there is a willing mind to give.

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- 8:13-15 When one member of the body of Christ is unable to give, others make up for their lack so that there is an equality in sustaining the local church and arms outside the church.
- 8:16, 17 Personal commendation of Titus. He was honest and headed the delegation to collect the offering for the Jerusalem church.
- 8:18 Titus had someone travel with him who helped spread the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- 8:19, 20 Money given to the Lord's work should be handled orderly and honestly. This is detail work for deacons or other administrators.
- 8:21 Regarding financial items of the church with honor before God and men.
- 8:22-24 Titus was sent as a diligent and tested fellow worker and the Corinthians were asked to openly show the proof of your love and reason for the apostle Paul boasting in them.
- 9:1, 2 Both the giving and administration of money should glorify the Lord.
- 9:3, 4 A collection or offering should not embarrass anyone.
- 9:5 Blessing in the Christian life results from giving to the Lord and not spending money for self pleasure. Bounty is used twice to mean blessing.
- 9:6 The more you sow, the more you harvest. God blesses the believer whose mental attitude is right.
- 9:7 Giving is done in a mental attitude of joy.
- 9:8, 9 God's divine essence guarantees the principles written here.
- 9:10 God keeps on supplying so that the believer can keep on giving.
- 9:11 Bountifulness means blessing. The more faith you exercise, the more enrichment you receive; all is non-meritorious activity.
- 9:12-13 Biblical giving results in thanksgiving expressed and the glorification of grace.
- 9:14 Giving also stimulates prayer, love and an admiration of grace in the believer who gives graciously.
- 9:15 The example of Christ. I can never come close to what Christ gave me in salvation. He is the unspeakable gift. True Bible giving is the result of occupation with Christ and gratitude to Him on the basis of who and what He is.
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