

**Topic:** Disciplines - Stewardship and Giving

### **Scriptural References**

Acts 13:22, 1 Chronicles 29, Leviticus 27:30

### **Biblical Explanation**

There is a four-letter word that communicates the depravity of the human heart as it relates to financial stewardship. That word is the term, "mine". The idea that we, as humans, have more authority over an aspect of God's creation than He does is absurd. Yet because many of us "work hard" for "our" money we believe we should have complete say-so over how and what it is used for. God desires us to be stewards –people who will manage what is God's. Quite the opposite from declaring finances to be ours, we are called to acknowledge all our wealth, no matter the amount, is God's and we are to use in a way that would bring God joy. King David was a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22) and he had extreme wealth. Looking at King David (and other examples) will help us understand God's heart towards giving.

Stewardship does not start with finances, stewardship starts with your purpose. David declared that his son Solomon was called to serve as king and build a temple for the Lord (1 Chron 29:1). The temple was a place where God would dwell and Solomon's role was to build such a place for God. Whatever funds, stature, or financial influence you have, ask yourself this simple question, "are the things you are building for you or for God"? Don't let the question go unanswered. from an accounting firm to a hot dog stand, build for God and not yourself.

In building God's temple, David, who has amassed great wealth, gives the finest of materials like gold, silver, and marble towards the creation of the temple (1 Chronicles 29:2-5). These materials were valuable then and they are valuable now. David, though tempted with greed as any person would be, chose to give from his most valuable goods. When considering your treasures, does God get your best or your leftovers? When you consider giving to Lord, consider offering from the best of what you have.

But giving is not just about what you or I give as individuals, giving is a collective effort. David leads by giving costly items, then the leaders of each tribe and household began offering costly goods toward the temple, which was an expression of God's kingdom. The tithe, traditionally 10%, served as the basis for giving (Lev

27:30). It cared for the leaders in the church, needs of the poor, and funded the systems of sacrifices and worship through the temple. All were expected to tithe, but many gave a free-will offering also. This free-will offering was above and beyond the basic tithe and it was an expression of generosity on the part of the giver. The entire community generously gave to God allowing for the accomplishments to be shared by all. I once sat in the home of one of our elderly neighbors. She shared that during an era when banks rarely funded African American endeavors, the church members pooled their resources together through giving and built the multi-million dollar worship location for Mt. Zion Church. This kind of collective giving is powerful and reminds each individual that our combined giving can do great things for the kingdom. It also demonstrates that all of our financial efforts are needed or we place more pressure on the faithful.

The framework of mandated giving and as well as free-will offerings is an Old Testament concept. In the New Testament, the expectation for giving remains but the amount one gives changes. 2 Corinthians 9:7 says, "Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." Instead of each person being mandated to give a certain amount, now each person is free to give what they deem appropriate. In Mark 12:43 Jesus shares that a woman who gave two coins equivalent to a penny gave out of all she had and though the amount could not compare to what other people gave, her offering was greater than what anyone else had given. What we find in both the Old and New Testaments is a free-will posture of giving that is based on gratefulness to God. The concept of tithe is a healthy one for some people but not a rule that the church enforces or expects. The church expects you to be mature and to consider what you should give and the church trusts that you will be faithful in that.

People give in different ways and all can be faithful. Barna is a group that does a lot of surveys and studies on Christians. Barna has found that younger people tend to get excited about things and give based on impulse. Different from younger people, older Christians tend to give more consistently with a regimented schedule. Which is better, giving weekly or occasionally? Neither. A person that gives \$100 a month for a year or a person that gives \$600 twice a year gives the same amounts. Methods and schedules will differ within the church body, but we all should be faithful in our giving. Let your reflection of God's mercy, compassion, and love be reflected in your generous giving whether that is monthly or quarterly. Sadly, Barna found that even though as a society we make more than we have in our past, we give less, far less than we were mandated. We were mandated to give 10%, on average Christians give 2.5% of their income. For reference, during the Great Depression people gave 3%. I am sure that God's joy and love and all the care and guidance that the church provides is

valued at more than 3% of our income. Give consistently or with less regularity but allow your giving to be faithful and reflective of the God who loves you and whom you love.

All that we have is God's. David declares, "Yours, O Lord, are the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heavens and on the earth is yours; yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all. Riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all" (1 Chronicles 29:11-12). Repent of the "mine" mentality of finances if you have embraced that idea and brought it into your life as a Christian. God sees you as an extension of His leadership. He has given you authority over His finances that He has placed in your care. Use those funds responsibly by being a good steward. Show you acknowledge that all riches and honor come from God and that your gifts or free-will offerings are an expression of that reality.

Imagine if God gave you 1000 dollars and said would you mind giving me back some just to show how grateful you are? Our prayer that you would realize that everything you have is God's and that you wouldn't give God a nickel of gratitude but with a joyful heart, you would be generous in showing God what sincere gratitude and celebration looks like through your giving.

As a church, MACC gives to MACC Development and missionaries. Thank you for generously giving so that in addition to what we offer as a church we can collectively contribute to the kingdom work of our nonprofit and missionaries around the world.

### **Main Points**

- Live to build for God and not for yourself.
- Give God your best and not your leftovers.
- Stewardship is a collective experience. Don't rob yourself of communal worship by failing to give.
- Give with discipline and based on impulse, just be faithful.
- Acknowledge all riches and honor come from God.
- Give from the heart. Demonstrate your gratitude and worship of God through your giving.

### **Questions**

1. What lies has society taught you about finances?
2. What would the world say is the purpose of money and how you should use it?

3. How can giving to God financially be challenging?
4. What roadblocks hindered you from giving freely?
5. Is a legalized mandate of 10% an easier approach to giving?
6. Do you prefer scheduled and calculated giving or impulse irregular giving?
7. Do you pray and consider how God is working in your life, in the lives of those around you, in your city before you consider your offering amount? What impact does it have?
8. What helps you give with joy?

### **Additional Resources**

#### *Research*

- <https://nonprofitssource.com/online-giving-statistics/>
- <https://www.barna.com/research/pastors-parishioners-differ-generosity/>