

PRINCIPLES OF GIVING

Following a sermon preached recently on “Kingdom Giving”, here are the basic underlying principles of Giving which were elucidated. After reading, do consider prayerfully what response God might be calling from you.

OLD TESTAMENT PRINCIPLES:

1. **Everything belongs to God.** *“Yours Lord is the greatness and the power, the glory, the majesty and the splendour, for everything in heaven and earth is yours..... Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand”.* (1Chronicles 29: 11,14). We are stewards of what God has put into our hands. He is the owner. Rather than feeling aggrieved at what God might ask us to give, we should feel thrilled at how much he allows us to keep for our own use.
2. **Giving as a Thank Offering to God.** *“It is good to give thanks to the Lord”* (Ps 92:1) For life, health, a job, home, family, friends, a mind that works...
For God’s presence, his love, forgiveness, answered prayer, freedom of worship...For Jesus, the bible, God’s great plan of salvation....
God is good. It is a delight to give him thanks. Money is one important way of showing devotion, therefore we are called to give from the bottom of our heart, not from the top of our wallets – just as God has given to us from the bottom of His heart and out of the riches of His treasure house.
3. **Giving of 10% to God was normal = the Tithe.** (Lev 27:30). This was a generous proportion of income, and specifically a deliberate giving back of the first and best part of what God’s people had received from Him. In OT days there were no income tax and mortgages to be taken into consideration, but nevertheless what is in mind here was something generous.

4. **Keeping back a part of the 10% was actually robbing God.** (Malachi 3:8) Here the prophet upbraids God’s people for not bringing in the full tithe into God’s house, and then encourages them to *“test God in this”* and see if he will not *“open the floodgates of heaven and pour down overflowing blessing”* in response to obedient tithing.
5. **Sometimes it was right to give more than 10%.** (1 Chron 29:5-9) On the occasion of the building of the Temple, the people gave over and above their regular gifts for a special project; and they gave willingly, generously and wholeheartedly. There was great rejoicing as a result.

NEW TESTAMENT PRINCIPLES:

Jesus, as a good Jew, would have based his thinking on OT principles. Therefore the Old Testament background can be assumed as a basis for our handling of money.

1. **Giving was sacrificial, willing and of a full heart.** (2Corinthians 9:6,7) Paul exhorts the believers to sow bountifully and thus to reap bountifully. He says that God loves a cheerful giver, literally in Greek a hilarious giver. Don’t give if there is no joy in it!
2. **Regular, Planned Giving.** The believers were encouraged to give regularly, to set aside money for the needs of the Body. *“On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income....”* (1Corinthians 16:2). Christians, who are members of the church, are therefore called to plan our giving, not simply to give when we happen to come to church, or from what we happen to have in our pockets. And indeed, it is the believers not the unbelievers who are called to give for the support of ministry; we are not to go out fundraising in the community to ask them to support our normal ministry. Regular, generous, planned giving from church members is a responsibility for each one.

3. **Giving should be secretly and honestly for the cause of God.** (Matthew 6:2). “Secretly” means not announcing or publicizing our generosity, not expecting a reward or recognition from any person, not comparing our gift with anyone else’s – but giving must simply be between me and the Lord. “Honestly” means not pretending in any way. Acts 5 tells the story of Ananias and Sapphira who came under God’s judgment not because of the amount they gave, but because of their dishonesty in pretending that they had given everything. But God knew the truth.
4. **Giving is to be an expression of love, worship and obedience.** God has given us Jesus Christ, and our giving is a response to the Incarnation. *“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich”.* (2Corinthians 8:9). How much is Jesus worth to you and me?
5. **Some Giving must go to the poor.** The early Church made an impact by caring for widows and orphans, the poor and the neglected. Jesus told a parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16), which indicates that neglecting the poor is a matter of life and death. In our giving we must not neglect the poor.

The greatest blockage to giving is wealth itself. We live in a world where money is the element of value, and therefore we sometimes hold onto it to be sure of our worth. Christianity sees a person’s true worth in terms of what they are prepared to give away.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR ST.MARK’S GIVERS:

1. **Pray and develop your relationship with God through Jesus.** Talk to Him about your whole life and how you can dedicate it all to his service. Pray specifically about what he

wants you to do with your money (ie. His money!!).

2. **Consider and Calculate** the amounts involved. Just as you cannot budget properly for your own financial affairs without doing some serious calculations, so you cannot work out what to give to God's work without doing the mathematics. 10% of gross income is a good and biblical starting point – but you must decide for yourself before God, according to your own circumstances. Why not prayerfully set your aim for a particular target and then try to increase your giving by 10% each year until you reach the point God is leading you to? Mature Christians are available in our congregation to help you with sensible, spiritual advice if you wish.
3. **Join the Planned Christian Giving Scheme (PCG).** This scheme helps you to make regular gifts to the Church, either through a Bank Standing Order (the very best way, which helps the church greatly with budgeting) or through the weekly Envelope Scheme. With this scheme you have numbered envelopes which you put in the collection bag each week, or which you save up when you are unable to come to church and put in all together when next in church. Ideally, both for regularity, for disciplined giving and for church budgeting, the envelopes should contain the same amount each week. Members of the PCG scheme are given tax receipts for their gifts. PCG forms and details of how to set up a Standing Order are available from the Office or from the information rack by the church door.
4. **Supporting Other Mission Organisations.** This is best done through the Church's General Fund; we believe at St.Mark's that all our work is Mission, and this includes 10% of the church's income given to charitable organizations for their mission and their care of the needy. Thus the more church members give, the more we will give away to the needs of others.

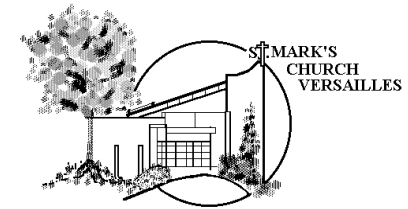
5. **Special Gifts.** Once your regular giving has been prayed through and planned, you are free to make special thanksgiving gifts for projects and to individuals as you wish and as the Lord directs. This is often when the true joy and delight of superabundant giving is experienced.

When you have prayed though all this, please make your response; your gifts will be welcomed for God's work.

"And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen" [Phil 4:19,20]

PRINCIPLES OF GIVING

How to think and pray about your finances



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