

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

Many ask, “How much do I *have* to give?” Instead, we ought to ask, “How can my money best be used for God’s kingdom?”

In answering that question we must first say that the Bible doesn’t command or want us to give all of our money to the church. Instead, God is pleased as we use our money in numerous God glorying ways such as caring for the needs of our family, paying taxes, being deliberate and cautious in spending, practicing generosity, saving for good ends, and contently living below one’s means (see Pr 12:24; 13:11; 27:23-27; 22:19; 23:4-5).

Nevertheless, God does call Christians to give to the church. In fact, if we are honest, many of us would have to say that we live far too comfortably and are often unaffected by God’s design for our money. The way we use our money testifies to our understanding of the richness of God’s grace given to us in Christ Jesus. Does your giving accurately reflect your heart for the Lord?

What then are we to do with our paychecks?

- Consider the opportunities that you have. How can you support those ministering the word of God, the needy among the covenant community, the expansion of God’s kingdom, etc.?
- Consider your resources. The amount you decide upon should be the result of a conscious decision, and should be proportionate to one’s income.
- Give cheerfully and thankfully to the Lord.

They [the Christians] busy themselves on earth, but their citizenship is in heaven... They marry and have babies, but do not kill unwanted babies. They share their table with all, but not their bed with all. They love everyone, but are persecuted by all. They are poor and yet make many rich; they are short of everything and yet have plenty of all things.

— a 1st century writer

*Giving
Glory to God
with our
Money:*

A BIBLICAL APPROACH

People often ask questions about giving to the church. Are Christians obligated to tithe? How much should I give? What does the Bible teach about our financial responsibilities before God?

TITHING IN OLD TESTAMENT ISRAEL

If we are to understand our financial responsibilities before God, it's crucial that we first understand how the Israelites, God's people of old, gave glory to God with their possessions.

After examining the Scriptures, one finds that the Israelites were commanded to annually give a tenth (a tithe) of the land's produce as well as their herds and flocks to God. Functionally, this tithe supported the ministers (the Levites) and was an integral part of Israel's ceremonial worship (see Lev 27:30-33; Nu 18:21-32). Yet as Israel grew, her ceremonial worship developed and so did the tithe. So as the Israelites entered the promise land, the tithe took on a new dimension. The tithe was no longer for the Levites alone, but was consecrated to God as the tithe donor, his entire family, and the Levites feasted and celebrated before God. God actually took pleasure as His people delighted in the physical blessings He had given them (see Deut 12:5-19, 14:22-29, 26:12-15).

In this celebration the Israelites were never to forget the needy. Therefore, every third year the tithes went to the less fortunate in the land—they too were to be shown the gracious love of God.

Finally, the Scriptures teach that as the Israelites obeyed God's tithing laws and honored him with their money, they would learn to revere their God. What becomes particularly amazing is that God was revered and glorified as His people rejoiced in Him—even with their money.

MONEY AND THE HEART

After viewing the beauty and graciousness of God's design for Israel's monetary worship, it is especially disheartening to see her unfaithfulness. Instead of recognizing God's dominion and rightful ownership with thankfulness, Israel often forsook God with her money. Of course, this disobedience pointed to something more ultimate—her heart condition (see Mal 3:6-15; Neh 10:30-39).

In the same way money lays bare the fundamental loves of our own hearts. Unfortunately, we often see that we too have attempted to build our own private kingdoms rather than loving God with our money. If we truly love we will love Him with our checkbooks as well as our heart.

CHRISTIAN FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

How then should we love God with our money? Well, as Christians, we are no longer bound to tithe; the tithe was a part of Israel's ceremonial worship. It was one regulation that supported worship particular to the Old Testament in that it looked forward to Jesus. Instead, the New Testament develops certain moral aspects of the tithe that direct how we may glorify God with our money.

Standard

Having understood that the Christian is not mandated to tithe, many assume that the opposite is true, namely, that Christian giving is entirely voluntary. This is simply not the

case. Christians are clearly commanded to give to God by giving to the church.

First, Christians are obligated to support those who minister the Word of God to them (see Cor 9:7-14; Gal 6:6; 1 Tim 5:17-18). Secondly, Christians are commanded to support the needy among God's covenant people (see 2 Cor 8-9; Acts 20:35; Rom 12:13; Gal 2:10; 1 Tim 5:3-16; Jas 1:27). Paul understood this giving as a product of the work of God's grace in one's life. The Scriptures see such giving as nothing less than giving oneself to the Lord.

Motive

The driving force behind Christian giving is the indescribable gift we have been given in Christ. John writes that we know what love is because of Jesus' sacrificial death on our behalf. Interestingly, he goes on to say that our love for God is expressed in fulfilling our Christian monetary duties (see 1 John 3:16-18). We are called to love God with our money because God has first loved us with His Son—He became poor for us by taking on the form of a man (see 2 Cor 8:9).

Goal

What then is the chief end of our money? The chief end of our money is the glory of God. In his letter to the Romans Paul states, "I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship." But as the apostle continues to explain this we learn that worshiping God involves all we are—even our money (see Rom 12:1, 13). The radical claims of the gospel of Christ Jesus lay claim on every penny that we have or will ever make.