

Thinking Biblically

about financial giving



Giving...

as a way of life

It's been said that you can tell what's important to someone by looking at two things – their diary and their bank statement!



What we do with our time & our money is a reflection of our values, what we believe to be important. It's a reflection of a way of life.

A Christian way of life doesn't happen just because someone decides to be a Christian. Our old values have created habits and ways of thinking. So when a person becomes a follower of Jesus, old & conflicting values have to change. This value system change can take a long time since some habits are deeply ingrained in us.

For all of us, one of the basic values confronted when we become followers of Christ concerns our view of money. Very simply, much of the world treats giving as a luxury or something to be avoided. Yet when we come to the Bible we see something very different. God Himself is a giver and He calls us to give money, time, indeed our whole lives, over and over again.

Some Biblical principles about giving

Three threads run through the tapestry of the Bible's message concerning Christian giving: stewardship, first fruits and tithing.

- 1. Stewardship** - a steward is someone who manages or administers the property or affairs of someone else. Our money belongs to God. For the Christian, financial stewardship is not measured by how much we keep hold of. It is primarily measured by how generous we are in giving to the work of God's Kingdom.
- 2. First Fruits** – The Bible consistently calls us to give back to God, the first & very best of what we have (e.g. Proverbs 3:9). This means that we should think about our giving as the first line on our budget, not an after-thought once we've paid our other bills. For those with an income, it's good to give ahead of the taxman, other obligations, pension contributions, etc..
- 3. Tithing** - In Old Testament times the tithe (a "tenth part") was the king's portion. After a king conquered a people, they would give him a tithe of their produce. Because Israel was conquered by God's love and care, Israel became obligated to render to the Lord a tithe.

Tithes were used for purposes including the support of the priests (Numbers 18: 21-24) and the care of the poor (Deut. 14:28-29). When added together, the Old Testament tithe requirements add up to about 28% of a person's income, on top of taxes imposed by the government and for the temple. The basic instruction was this - "a tithe of everything ... belongs to the Lord; it is holy to the Lord" (Leviticus 27:30-33).

Some FAQs...



1. Is tithing legalistic?

Tithing (or giving 10%) existed before the law was given (see Genesis 14:18-21), and the Christian church has historically followed this pattern. Tithing is not a legalistic edict, rather a wonderful place to start a life pattern of generous giving.

2. 10% seems a lot - what should I do?

As someone starts a journey of giving, a tithe can seem a long way off. As someone has said, "a journey of a thousand miles starts with a first step". Wherever you are with financial giving right now, take a step forward into a more generous future.

3. I'm tithing already, so I'm done, right?

Whilst for some a tithe can seem a long way off, for others it can become an excuse that limits generosity! Jesus said that our righteousness should "surpass that of the Pharisees" (Matt. 5:20). Those religious people of Jesus' day were tithers. In the light of what Jesus has done for us, we believe that Spirit-led people will be led to give at least as generously as the Pharisees.

4. Should my giving go to the local church?

In his book on finances titled "A Biblical Theology of Material Possessions", Gene Getz writes "Every true believer is part of the *universal church* (1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 4:11-16). However, when we study the New Testament, we cannot bypass the concept of the *local church*. In fact, approximately 95% of all the references to the *ekkleisia* (Greek for "church") are references to local, visible, and organised expressions of the universal church. Luke's historical record in the book of Acts is an account of founding local churches. We cannot bypass the concept of the local church when it comes to determining how Christians should use their material possessions."

In the Vineyard we believe it is the local church and not another organisation that is chiefly designed by God to be the agent of His kingdom in this world (Eph. 3:10). Only the local church crosses generational lines, ministering not only to students, but to grandparents, children, singles and marrieds. Only the local church carries on all of the functions of kingdom living including the worship of God, the teaching of God's Word, evangelism and discipling, prayer for the sick, the burial of deceased loved ones, world missions, etc.

The pastoral staff, along with many others, tithe (or beyond) their income to the church.

In summary, the local church is the chief focal point of God's plan for the ages and ought to be our focal point for giving.

Ten good reasons to give:

Giving is an opportunity:

1. to experience joy

God is a giver and anytime we imitate Him, we tap into the very life and being of God. Only givers can truly experience the joy of God.

2. to show gratitude to God

God has blessed each one of us in so many ways. Giving is a primary way of saying “thank you” to God by returning to Him a portion of what He has given us.

3. to participate in all the ministries of the church

Our church is growing & has a wide range of ministries. It’s impossible for any one person to be involved in them all. But we can participate through giving.

4. to practically acknowledge our view of life

Either we view our money as ours (secular worldview) or we view it as God’s (Biblical worldview). Giving is a way of acknowledging that we all we have is dedicated to God, even though only a portion may be given back to Him.

5. to support what we believe in

Financial giving is not the only way to support a church, but it is a major way to support what we believe in.

6. to be free from financial anxiety

People who hold tightly to their money are so often held captive to financial concerns, whilst those who open their hands freely in giving experience emotional freedom in financial matters.

7. to pay for services that I & my family receives

It does seem an extraordinary thing that some of us receive services such as training for our children, teaching, a place that nurtures our spiritual well-being and opportunities to participate in ministry, and yet some who are able to give allow others to pay. Someone is picking up the bill for the coffee, lights, heating, pastoral salaries, mortgage, and materials that we all enjoy.

8. to receive financial blessing from God

In Malachi 3, God says we're to "Bring the whole tithe" to Him. He instructs us to "Test Me in this" with a promise that He will "open the floodgates of heaven". In many ways I am hesitant to call attention to this awesome promise of God for financial blessing, yet my own experience is this: I have never met a tither whom God has not provided for financially. God seems quick to fulfill this promise in Malachi 3 and to bless those who take Him at His word.

9. to store up treasure in heaven

God sees the secret things of our hearts (Matt 6). Whether or not there is a reward here on earth, there will certainly be a heavenly payoff for those who give financially toward the work of God's kingdom.

10. to give beyond my own family and me

If the only things I use money for are things that directly bless me such as my own home furnishings, or my own family and friends, then Jesus says I am no different from an unbeliever. Non-Christians pay for these kinds of things too. Christian giving is different because it involves sowing financially beyond our own circle and ourselves.

Giving at Riverside Vineyard Church

We believe that giving should be a joyful act; we don't want anyone to give out of an unwilling or legalistic spirit. We do ask those who are a part of this church to commit to regular financial giving. Here's the best ways to do so:

- **Standing order** – an instruction to your bank to make regular payments. Standing Order forms are available at the Welcome Desk or from the church office.
- **Bank Transfer** – set up regular giving via online banking. Account details from the Welcome desk or the church office.
- **Giving envelopes** – some prefer to give at Sunday services - please do make use of the white giving envelopes
- **Gift Aid** – if you're a UK tax payer, please do complete a Gift Aid declaration. This costs you nothing and enables the church to reclaim an additional 25% of your gift from HMRC
- **Giving in your will** – we can give in our death as a continuation of the pattern of our lives.

Thank you so much for being part of the mission of Riverside Vineyard Church

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