



WHY WE GIVE

Disciple Making Studies for the Church





Money: A Spiritual Issue?

The Bible is very clear that God has a standard for the disciplined and honorable management of every area of our lives. Colossians 3:17 states:

“And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.”

This verse covers everything! It demands that the way we order our lives, and make use of the resources, opportunities, and abilities God gives to us, is to be a reflection of our devotion to Christ. Certainly this includes the area of our finances. The righteous use and management of our money speaks volumes about our self-control, our faith, and our commitment to the Kingdom of God.

From this and other passages it is clear that the way in which we use money for ourselves, for our families, and especially for the Kingdom of God is, from the perspective of our Heavenly Father, an intensely spiritual issue.

The Bible Charts the Course

At Grace Baptist Church we are deeply committed to God’s Word as our guide in all things. We strongly affirm that the church belongs to Jesus Christ, and that He is responsible for building it and providing all that is necessary for its ministries. This means that He works through His people to provide the resources, both spiritual and physical, that are required to fulfill the plans He has for us. With Jesus Christ as the Head of our church, we need never worry that we will lack the resources to follow where He leads.

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But, Scripture also vividly describes our responsibility to support the work of God financially. But why? Does God need our money? Or, can we somehow buy His favor? And is there any guide for giving? And which counts more, the amount? or the attitude? or both? Let's find the answers together.

Money And Godliness

The Bible has quite a lot to say about the use and abuse of money. Are we to assume then, that there is a connection between the use of money and godliness? A thoughtful answer is given by Dr. Donald Whitney in his book *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*:

But as much as anything else, the reason use of money and the things it buys is one of the best indicators of spiritual maturity and godliness is that we exchange such a great part of our lives for it. Because we invest most of our days working in exchange for money, there is a very real sense in which our money represents us. Therefore, how we use it expresses who we are, what our priorities are, and what's in our hearts. As we use our money and resources Christianly, we prove our growth in Christlikeness.

Owners or Stewards?

The starting place for understanding God's perspective on our use of money is simple: ultimately we are not owners; we are stewards. James the Apostle reminds us that everything we have has come to us as gifts from our God:

"Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow." (James 1:17)

What we have really isn't ours. Everything belongs to God. He has graciously put it on deposit with us to use in a way that pleases him. Jesus had much to say about the responsibilities of stewardship (Luke 12:41–44; 16:1–13; Matthew 25:14–30). And Paul summed up the office of a steward in I Cor. 4:2: ". . . *it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy.*"

Stewards are to be trustworthy and faithful—not to their own dreams and designs, but to the plans and principles of their Master. They use the things He

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has entrusted to them in a way that will show just how much they love him. For Paul, this was expressed in his word to the Philippians to “...conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ” (Phil. 1:27). At the very beginning of our individual giving strategy must be the desire to honor God in all things, even our money.

A Biblical Perspective

There are 6 reasons why Christ-followers joyfully support the work of God with their money:

1. WE GIVE BECAUSE GIVING IS BOTH COMMANDED AND COMMENDED BY GOD.

The Old Testament’s Testimony

In the Old Testament, even before the giving of the Law, Abraham, and Jacob were involved in giving. Known as paying a tithe, this giving was found throughout the Ancient Near East as a form of honoring, and acknowledging submission to deities and human rulers (Gen. 14:17–20; 28:22).

With the giving of the Law tithes became mandatory. These payments back to God came in the form of first fruits and tithes. By bringing the first portions from their fields and their flocks, they learned that their trust was in God, not in their harvests. Imagine waiting all those weeks and months for the first heads of grain, and then taking them as an offering to God! What a beautiful Old Testament illustration of Our Lord’s words in Matthew 6:31–33:

“Do not be anxious then, saying “What shall we eat?” or “What shall we drink?” or “With what shall we clothe ourselves?” For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His Kingdom, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”

The New Testament’s Emphasis

The New Testament brings an improvement over the legally mandated giving of the Old. The emphasis is now found to be on voluntary giving from a cheerful heart (II Cor. 9:7). The New Testament replaces the obligation of the tithe with the privilege of generosity (I Timothy 6:17,18; II Cor. 8:1–5; I Cor. 16:1, 2).

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2. WE GIVE BECAUSE GIVING IS AN ELEMENT OF WORSHIP AND DEVOTION TO GOD.

Worship is a popular topic today. But, it has always been important to God. The best definition of worship is simply a proper response to God. Worship is the response of all we are to all God is. And this includes our money.

Worship: Always the Best

From the beginning worship meant giving God the best. The Old Testament Law demanded two things: 1) God deserved the best (seen both in quality, i.e. spotless lambs without blemish, and in prominence, i.e. the first-born of the flocks, and first fruits of the fields); and 2) an attitude of obedience must accompany the act of sacrifice (see I Sam. 15:22; Ps. 51:16,17; Prov. 15:8;21:3). When approaching God, we must bring our best, knowing that our activity is sanctified by our attitude.

Worship: Never Empty Handed

In 2 Samuel 24, David wanted to build an altar to God on a hill near his home. The owner offered to give it to him, but David recognized that honoring God was not ever to be a convenient thing. He said *“No, but I will buy it from you for a price. I will not offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God that cost me nothing.”* The same is true today. Worship is always a costly privilege that demands us to offer all of our lives to God.

Giving: A Sacrifice of Worship to God

In Philippians 4:18, Paul uses the language of the sacrificial system to describe the church's generosity to him. He clearly shows that supporting God's work financially is actually a praise-worthy means of worship:

“But I have received everything in full, and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.”
(emphasis added)

Today we don't bring God offerings of grain, oil, or animals. Our offerings are much different. But, the purpose remains the same. Our offerings demonstrate our hearts devotion to God, and the mission of Christ.

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Our gifts become a sacrifice of thanksgiving (see Ps. 50:14, 23) as we come before our God, ready to acknowledge His grandeur and worth.

3. WE GIVE BECAUSE GIVING DEMONSTRATES OUR DEPENDENCE UPON GOD.

You Shall Have No Other Gods Before Me

God has always been a jealous God. He desires us to find our security and satisfaction in Him (see Jer. 9:23, 24). But, we love independence. Even as believers, we are not immune to the subtle, yet powerful influences of a society that gives high marks for self-managed, temporal security.

In Matthew 6:19–21 Jesus explained the First Commandment when He admonished the crowd that “. . . *where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*” Money can easily become a god to us. Whatever you make the focus of your energy will steal your heart, and become your god. Rather than focus on the temporal, He advised them to “seek first the Kingdom of God,” (vs. 33) and leave the question of temporal provision and security up to the King.

Giving: Demonstrating Dependence

Money has a strange power over us. It also tends to insulate us from daily need. Few of us have to ask God for daily bread. So, how do we live dependent upon God? Simply by giving sacrificially to the God who alone is our security.

4. WE GIVE BECAUSE GIVING PROVIDES A WAY TO MEET THE NEEDS OF OTHERS.

The Benefit of Benevolence

Benevolence has long historical precedent in the church. The people of God have led the way in providing assistance for the disadvantaged. We see the earliest examples in the giving of the Law. In Deut. 26:12, God gave these instructions, which continue to show God’s heart today:

“When you have finished paying all the tithe of your increase in the third year, the year of tithing, then you shall give it to the Levite, to the stranger, to the orphan and to the widow, that they may eat in your towns, and be satisfied.”

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The benefits of this system were many, not the least of which was that it distinguished Israel as merciful and compassionate, unlike the pagan nations whose attitude toward the poor and downtrodden was disdain. By being benevolent, Israel demonstrated their corporate likeness to God.

New Testament Examples

In Acts 2:43–44 and 4:32–35 Luke describes how the church took care to meet individuals needs so that there was “*not a needy person among them*” (4:34).

This could only become reality through the consistent giving of God’s people to be stored up against the day of need.

Employment and Benevolence

In Eph. 4:28 Paul makes an interesting, and often over-looked point:

“Let him who steals steal no longer; but rather let him labor, performing with his hands what is good, in order that he may have something to share with him who has need.” (emphasis added)

God gives us employment not only for our own well-being but also so we can help others in need. Providing for others is seen as a privilege (see: 2 Corinthians 8:3,4) of being employed.

The Vehicle of Benevolence

It is always right for us to help others privately. But, the church is set up by God to administer benevolence on a grand scale.

Acts 4:34, 35 illustrates this: “*For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales, and lay them at the apostles’ feet; and they would be distributed to each, as any had need.*”

When we give to God we are demonstrating many things: obedience to His commands, devotion to His majesty, and dependence on His provision. But we also demonstrate our likeness to Him, by offering up our money as a channel for His mercy.

5. WE GIVE BECAUSE GIVING IS PARTNERSHIP WITH CHRIST IN HIS MISSION THROUGH THE CHURCH TO THE WORLD

The Lesson of the Levites

When God set out the ways His people were to approach Him in worship, He set apart the tribe of Levi to serve as ministers before Him. He laid special responsibilities and restrictions upon them. One of these was that they were to have no inheritance, no portion of land or provisions. In Deut. 18:1,2, Moses reminded them:

“The Levitical priests, the whole tribe of Levi, shall have no portion or inheritance with Israel; . . . And they shall have no inheritance among their countrymen; the Lord is their inheritance, as He promised them.”

God’s intent was clear: those who served nearest to Him were to find their security and provision in Him alone. From the beginning, those who served in the house of the Lord took their living from among the offerings of the people.

Giving and the Ministers of the Church

Paul had much to say about the responsibilities of the people to support those who labored in the work of the Gospel. I Cor. 9:7-14 is a fairly lengthy, and passionate argument proclaiming the right of a minister of God to gain his living from the church. He closes by appealing to the directions of the Lord Himself:

“So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel” (vs. 14)

In much the same way as the Old Testament Levites, Paul suggests that those who serve can expect to receive back from those being served:

“For it is written in the Law of Moses, ‘you shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing’. . . If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we should reap material things from you? . . . Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat the food of the temple, and those who attend regularly to the altar have their share with the altar?” (vs. 9, 11, 13)

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In Gal. 6:6 Paul stresses the same concept:

“And let the one who is taught the word share all good things with him who teaches.”

God’s plan has always been that those who minister as His representatives are worthy to be supported by the church. Paul calls this “double honor” (I Tim. 5;17,18) for they are worthy of being honored not only with respect, but financially as well.

Giving and the Mission of the Church

On at least one occasion, Paul benefited from the financial support of a church while on a missionary journey. In Phil. 4:14–16 he describes how the church at Philippi sent many gifts to him in order to sustain his missionary efforts. As a result, Paul states that he is *“amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent.”* And then comes a verse that is often misunderstood:

“And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”

It is essential to grasp Paul’s point here! This verse is not spoken as a promise to individuals. Rather, it is a promise to a generous church that God would not allow their generosity in support of the Gospel to be a cause of their own needs going unmet.

From this text we can see that God expects His people to use their abundance to free up those whom He has called to proclaim the Gospel. This must be part of Paul’s argument in Romans 10:13–14 where he proclaims that people, who must hear, believe, and call upon the Name of the Lord in order to be rescued from sin will never hear unless preachers are sent. Essential to this “sending” is the promise of support so that the preachers can dedicate themselves fully to the work of ministry.

6. WE GIVE BECAUSE GIVING PROTECTS OUR HEARTS FROM THE TEMPTATIONS AND SNARES ASSOCIATED WITH WEALTH.

The Peril of Insulation

Wealth can distance us from depending on God by insulating us from daily need. The danger of trusting in money are loudly proclaimed throughout Scripture (see for instance, Psalm 49). But, our tendency to fall in love with money has not taken God by surprise. In His gracious omniscience, He has provided an activity, a sort of “spiritual aerobics” by which our hearts and minds can be kept in good spiritual shape with regard to money. This activity is generous giving.

The Protection of Generous Giving

In his travels Paul must have seen many lives wrecked by a consuming passion for wealth. When he comes to give instructions to a young Timothy, he has much to say about the snares of money:

“But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.” (I Tim. 6:9, 10)

Paul draws a close connection between wanting to get rich, and loving money. If fact, the two concepts feed upon each other! And the outcome is dangerous, leading the person into the presence of all sorts of evil, even to the place where they discredit their testimony and bankrupt their lives. Fortunately, Paul has not only accurately diagnosed the problem, he has given the divine prescription capable of keeping the heart immune to the corrupting advances of greed. He says, in I Tim. 6:17–19:

“As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. ¹⁸ They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, ¹⁹ thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.” (emphasis added)

Several things are worth noting in Paul’s words of verse 17:

- Those with material wealth are not to be conceited about it (as though it came as a result of anything other than God’s gracious provision).

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- They are not to find their security in it (since it is uncertain).
- They are to look past their money to find in God their sole source of hope.
- They are to recognize that all good things are actually gifts from God, and are to be enjoyed, not deified.

But, perhaps even more important are the words of verses 18 and 19 in which Paul sets out the “exercise routine” necessary to keep men from the perils listed in verse 17. To avoid the snares and temptations of wealth they are to:

- **Do good:** They are too pre-occupied with doing rather than acquiring.
- **Be rich in good works:** They are to focus their energies into those things which have eternal rewards.
- **Be generous and ready to share:** They are to give their money away, as a means of proclaiming to their own hearts that they refuse to find their security in anything other than God.

If this exercise routine is carefully followed, there remains a great reward. Paul, in vs. 19, says that those whose lives are characterized by good works and generous giving store up *“the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.”*

Why, then do we give?

We give generously because by so doing we take control of our heart and point it toward God, in whom is all our hope.

We refuse to allow money to become a dominant force in our lives, and just to show it who’s boss, we regularly give some away.

Only a fool would pull a ladder out from under himself, and when we give we are proving that money is not the ladder that holds us up. Rather, we are solidly held in the arms of our Sovereign Lord, who has personally guaranteed our well-being.

SOME PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS

1. How Much Should I Give?

The Bible does not say how much the New Testament Christ-follower is to give. The tithes of the Old Testament Law have passed away. The New Testament Christ-follower is under no such law.

However, this doesn't mean that the New Testament has nothing to say on the matter. Our devotion to Christ will mean that our giving lives up to the following guidelines. We are to give:

- Generously (I Tim. 6:18)
- According to how God has prospered you (I Cor. 16:2)
- With Christ as our model (II Cor. 8:1-14, esp. vs. 9)
- Cheerfully not reluctantly, or under compulsion, (II Cor. 9:7)

2. What If My Financial Situation Doesn't Allow Me To Give?

Sometimes people feel they can't give. However, before excusing yourself from giving, you should carefully consider if you are being negligent in your financial management and discipline. If this is the case, Grace can help! We have men, trained in sound financial management, who will sit down with you at no charge to help you begin managing your financial resources righteously.

3. Why Should I Give To Grace Baptist Church?

There are many reasons to give financially to the work of God. But many question whether giving to the local church should take precedent over other organizations.

It makes good sense to support the place where you and your family benefit from the ministries of Grace.

NOURISHMENT

At Grace we are passionate about teaching and modeling the Bible so that lives are transformed, to the glory of God. We strive to deliver spiritual nourishment through biblical exposition, corporate worship, and mutual love and care.

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Consequently, it is appropriate for those who benefit from Grace to support the on-going ministries of Grace so that they, their families, and the community can continue to grow in the knowledge of Christ and love for his world.

FELLOWSHIP

Grace is a place where the love of God is put into action. As a worshipping community, we take care of one another, enjoy being together, and understand that our mutual love and care is a means by which God is growing us in both grace and truth. In a world that is increasingly isolated and alone, Grace is a refuge for us all, and deserves our continued financial support.

LEADERSHIP

Giving to the local church also demonstrates a godly respect for the leadership of the church, and their wisdom in administering God's work. Giving to Grace frees the individual from having to decide which ministries and benevolent needs are worthy of support.

When you give to Grace Baptist Church your money will be used in a manner consistent with our mission to "make and multiply Christ-followers who magnify the glory of God."

PARTNERSHIP

We believe we are privileged to partner with Jesus Christ in the greatest rescue mission of all time. Together we can do more than anyone can do alone. The pooling of our gifts and resources allows Grace to invest heavily in the lives of our children and students while bringing discipleship and service opportunities to our entire congregation. Together we are invested in our community through a wide variety of evangelistic and benevolent ministries. Together we are involved in the ministry of Christ around the globe through short-term teams, and our supported global ministry partners. And, we are looking to do even more.

Simply stated, if we find the church to be the primary means through which the Lord Jesus is molding us into His likeness, and advancing his Kingdom worldwide, then it ought to be the primary object of our giving.

4. Then Why Don't I Give?

The answer to this question is intensely personal, but is also something that matters to God. There are excellent reasons for being involved financially in the work of Grace. Your giving is a good indication of where your heart is, of where your priorities are, and of the place God holds in your life.

Generosity is what He demands of us, and any failure to follow His direction in this should be a signal to our hearts that something is wrong. Some adjustment is needed in our outlook on life and our devotion to the Savior. Simply put, to be generous in giving is to obey; a lack of generosity is sin.

Conclusion

You've just read 6 reasons for supporting Grace Baptist Church financially. But it is important to know that God really doesn't need our money. His work is not dependent upon us. However, He does give us the opportunity to partner with Him in the great work of the Kingdom of God.

When we take up this privilege we will find that the benefits of generosity toward the work of Christ are all ours! We give because we desperately need to obey Him, to worship Him, to grow in dependence upon Him, to imitate Him in His mercy, to tell others about Him, and to discipline our hearts not to run away from Him. And when all is said and done, being near to the heart of God through obedience is the greatest benefit of all.



GRACE
BAPTIST CHURCH

22833 Copper Hill Drive
Santa Clarita, CA 91350
www.gracebaptist.org



@gracescv