

# financial stewardship A BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

## BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES

**EVERYTHING BELONGS TO GOD.** (*Psalms 24:1; Job 41:1*) God is not asking for “our stuff.” It is all “his stuff.” We are stewards not owners.

**WE CAN BE BLIND TO GREED.** Jesus tells us to “watch out” when it comes to greed (*Luke 12:15*). Many sins are obvious, greed is not. We can easily lie to ourselves about being greedy through comparison desiring to justify ourselves.

**MONEY IS CONNECTED TO OUR HEART.** (*Matt 6:21*) It is not a mere matter of practicality. It is a matter of the heart. It is about worship (*Phil 4:18; 2 Cor. 9:12; Matt 6:24*).

**OUR GENEROSITY IS IN RESPONSE TO THE GENEROSITY OF JESUS.** (*2 Cor. 8:7-9*) We don't give to earn God's approval. We have the approval of God given to us because of Jesus. Salvation is given to us as a gift of God. We give because we are loved by God not in order to be loved by God. How we handle finances reveals our heart and our level of trust in God.

## BIBLICAL PRACTICES

God gives various financial practices to help his people activate their trust and partner in his purposes. One can note both the practices of both the Old Testament and New Testament people of God.

### OLD TESTAMENT

**TITHES** | Tithe means tenth. Israel was to tithe (give 10%) to care for the Levites and their ministry (*Num. 18:20-24*). They were to tithe to the sacred feast (*Deut. 14:22-27*) and every third year they were to tithe to the poor (*Deut. 14:28-29; 26:12-13*). Scholars discuss whether this was one, two, or three tithes at the same time. The point is that Israel was expected by God to tithe and it is clear that tithing was the starting gate not the finish line of their stewardship.

**OFFERINGS** | In addition to tithes, Israel gave free-will offerings (*Ezra 1:4-5; Ex. 35:29*). They also gave burnt, vow, peace and festival offerings (*Lev. 22:18-23; Num. 15:3*). Israelites were also expected to care for other Israelites in need (*Lev. 25:35*) and to leave crop gleanings for the poor and foreigners (*Lev. 19:9-10*).

**FIRSTFRUITS & THE BEST** | God was to get the firstfruits of harvest, the firstborn of the herds and the best they had to offer (*Prov. 3:9; Deut. 15:21*). This involved incredible trust because if one gives to God first then the natural “what if” questions emerge.

## CONCLUSIONS

**CHRISTIANS ARE TO CHEERFULLY GIVE.** (*2 Cor. 9:7*) as an authentic expression of gratitude, faith, and worship. We give in response to Jesus, in alignment with the biblical practices, according to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

**GIVING IS NOT OPTIONAL** and God deserves our firstfruits rather than our leftovers. How we use our money reveals our heart.

**TITHING IS NOT THE STANDARD.** Practically, it may be helpful to have 10% as a guideline and starting line but everything belongs to God. If we give 10% and think we “paid off” God - we missed it.

**CHOOSE A PERCENTAGE.** Budget. Give consistently. Work hard and aim to continue to grow in generosity.

### NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament shows that giving was important to the early church. Tithing is not emphasized, though there is some evidence that the early church continued to tithe. The focus is giving in response to Jesus. We see Christians not just leaving the gleanings of fields but selling fields to meet the needs of others (*Acts 4:32-35*) It makes sense, that in response to Jesus, Christians are more not less generous than the O.T people of God. They went well beyond tithing with intense Spirit-led generosity in response to Jesus.

**STEWARDSHIP AS A COMMUNITY** | Throughout the scriptures God's people give and trust leaders to steward on their behalf (*Acts 4:34-35; 2 Cor. 8-9*). Giving is not just an individualistic practice but occurs within community.

**CARE FOR SPIRITUAL LEADERS** | The Israelites were to care for the Levites (*Deut. 12:19*). This practice of God's people giving so that spiritual leaders are honored and released to lead, teach and shepherd continues for the Church (*2 Tim. 5:17-18; Gal. 6:6; 1 Cor. 9:3-19; Matt. 10:10 cf. 1 Cor. 9:14*).

### CARE FOR THE NEEDY

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How we steward finances matters to God. Jesus spends a great deal of time teaching on stewardship and, therefore, it is something that matters to us and that we don't ignore.

## WHO GIVES?

Giving is an act of worship for Christians and is an important part of us being a church family. Visitors and those who don't follow Jesus are under no obligation to give.

*Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.* JESUS (MATTHEW 6:19-21 ESV)

## WHY WE GIVE?

**OBEDIENCE TO GOD.** We give because God instructs us to and it is all his to begin with (*Ps. 24:1; Job 41:11*). The Bible gives us instructions for financial stewardship that activates our faith. God is after our heart. He wants us to trust him and knows that our resources are connected to our heart (*Matt 6:21,24*). Therefore, our giving is an act of love, faith and worship.

**GRATITUDE IN RESPONSE TO JESUS.** We have experienced the radical generosity of God in Jesus (*2 Cor. 8:9*). Jesus gave himself to the point of death rescuing us. With gratitude, we generously steward our finances in response to the generosity of Jesus.

**USING TEMPORARY RESOURCES FOR AN ETERNAL KINGDOM.** None of our possessions will last. When we contribute to the work of Jesus, we are participating in something that has eternal purposes.

## WHO DO WE GIVE TO?

We have two streams of giving:

**CITYLIGHTS CHURCH:** the ministry and mission of the CityLights family.

**GLOBAL GENEROSITY PARTNERSHIPS:** our partnerships with church plants and justice organizations around the world.

Our first priority is to be faithfully responsible with our church family and what God has called us to do in our region. Secondly, we want to make financial offerings that will extend our impact around the globe. This occurs as we make ongoing donations via Pre-Authorized Debit (PAD). Our resources are pooled and then strategically distributed to various partners.

## WHAT TO GIVE?

If one is a follower of Jesus, we recommend first gaining an understanding of what the Bible teaches related to financial stewardship. It can be good to talk to someone who can help explain. Secondly, pray and ask God how he wants you to steward his resources. Third, choose a percentage and give consistently.

## HOW TO GIVE?

**PRE-AUTHORIZED DEBIT (PAD):** this is preferred as there are no fees and helps us plan for Global Generosity Partnerships.

**CREDIT CARD GIVING:** this can occur online or at the iPad terminal.

**CASH OR CHEQUE.**