

FINANCIAL GIVING: some pastoral thoughts.

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Financial giving should be heartfelt and viewed as an act of worship. In this brief essay, I'll provide 8 pastoral words of counsel to every Christian on giving to the Lord.

1. Give **WORSHIPFULLY**.

Remember that God seeks worshipers who worship in spirit and in Truth. God seeks the *heart* in worship, not heartless actions. God looks at the heart when you give. Don't give begrudgingly or angrily or greedily (hoping that He'll provide you with more to spend). Give out of a heart overflowing with gratitude and worship for what He has done for you. Give happily and give heartily!

2. Give **EARLY**.

Set aside a sum of money immediately when you get paid. Don't wait till you pay all the bills *to then* figure out what to give to God. Inevitably, there won't be much left to give. Give God out of your firstfruits. Before anything else, I believe a biblical case could be made to give early and give generously and give your best to God. Live on what's left over after giving early and first to the Lord.

3. Give **SACRIFICIALLY**.

"How much should I give?" people often ask. My answer: I have no idea. But give till you *feel* it. It is easy for a wealthy man can give a penny to God. God doesn't 'need' our money; it's all His anyway. Give enough till you feel it, till you sacrifice something, till you need God to provide in a great & providential way. Trust Him. Give sacrificially. Christ sacrificed *all* for you. Can you not sacrifice *much* for Him financially? Give to your local church first and foremost. Then give to other ministries, friends, or needs.

4. Give **PRAYERFULLY**.

As in all acts of worship, bathe the entire opportunity in prayer. Whether in preaching, evangelizing, discipling, church discipline, the Lord's Supper, or in the act of giving, immerse it in prayer. Adore God for His glory and grace. Confess your sins and failures to Him. Receive the amazing grace & everlasting mercy of Christ afresh. Affirm your resolve to abstain from greediness and live thankfully. Prayerfully give money to the Lord. Do it with a heart of communion and communication with the Lord.

5. Give **EXPECTANTLY**.

Give with an expectation that God will use the money that you offered to Him for the greater progress of the gospel in the church, around the area, in your nation, and across the globe. Pray and anticipate how the Lord may magnify His name through your obedience and faithful generosity. But remember, you may not ever see the magnitude and the effect of your giving in *this* life. But that is fine since we don't live for here anyway. We live for Christ and for eternity. So give and expect! Pray and anticipate! Ask God to do great and big and glorious things through small, weak, frail vessels like us. Weak and available and humble vessels can do mighty things for the glory of Christ! Expect much from your great God!

6. Give **THANKFULLY**.

One of the most repeated commands in God's Word given to the people of God is to be thankful. How easy it is to live throughout the day and complain more often than we express gratitude. Indeed, one of the remarks concerning the wicked that pervades Scripture is that they are "ungrateful." Don't be so greedy that you have a selfish, covetous, self-pitying attitude when you give money to Christ and His church. Give with a heart of gratitude with overwhelming awe that God grants *you* the opportunity and privilege to give what's *His* back to Him for His glory and for His service for the fame of His name! Thank Him that He incorporates you in the ministry for His magnification.

7. Give MISSIONALLY.

Give with a goal. Have plans in mind in your giving and long for God to fulfill them as you obediently give to Him of your finances. Give to further the kingdom. Give so that the mission of the gospel spreads. Give so that the local church ministry flourishes. Give so that local churches are planted around the globe. Give so that men are trained and equipped to preach the Word worldwide. Give so that missionaries can *leave* and *get* to the unreached and unengaged fields. Indeed, much of this depends first of all in being *in* a good church where your shepherd-elders are faithfully disseminating resources for the furthering of the gospel locally, domestically, and globally. So, Christian, give for the purpose of gospel growth!

8. Give ETERNALLY.

In all your giving, bear in mind that it's never just to twist God's arm so that He'll pay you back something bigger and better so you can lavishly spend for yourself. Give for eternity. Give so that souls are won and gathered into the kingdom. Give remembering that God will reward you in glory as you served Him and His church with the resources that He entrusted to you. Give to impact heaven and hell. If you can't go around the world, then give generously to those who can and who will and see them impact those around the world so that souls are won and people would be gathered from many nations to worship the Lamb who is worthy to be praised! Give not just for the moment or the week or the month. Give for eternity!