

# Giving: Should I be as Generous as God?

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## I. INTRODUCTION

God provides us many principles that not only tell us how much to give, but the kind of attitude we should have when we give. However, if our attitude towards money/wealth is skewed, if we look at wealth the way the world does, then we will constantly struggle with giving. But if we have God's perspective on the matter, then we'll realize that our wealth comes from God and we will be more than happy to give regardless of the amount.

## II. REVIEW

### Giving in the Old Testament

- A. Tithing: Abraham and Jacob tithed (Gen.14:20; 28:22). Abraham's was a one-time event while Jacob's was a lifetime event. The first, second, and third tithes in the Mosaic Law (Lev. 27:30–33; Num. 18:21–24; Deut. 14:22–27, 28–29) are very specific in their purpose and recipient. The other passages in the Old Testament as well as those in the New (except Gen. 14 and 28 and Heb. 7) that mention tithing find their origin in the Mosaic tithes. Using the Mosaic tithes to justify tithing 10% today has its problems: First, how does one choose the figure 10% when in fact the combined average annually of the three Mosaic tithes was 23 1/3%? Second, how does one justify giving 10% to the Church when each tithe had a very specific recipient and it was not the Church? Third, the Mosaic Law was given to Israel not the Church (Lev. 27:34; Deut. 4:8; 5:1–3; Rom. 2:14; 9:4). Likewise, to use Abraham's or Jacob's tithe as precedent for tithing today, one must provide justification.
- B. Freewill Giving (Ex. 25:1–9; 35:4–36:7) also existed in the Old Testament and was part of the sacrificial system, Lev. 7:16; 22:18–23; 23:38.
- C. With the firstfruits of all your increase (Prov. 3:9): this was not part of the Law, but it tells us to honor God with our wealth and the first and best of our earnings.

### Giving in the New Testament

- A. The Widow's Two Mites (Mk. 12:41–44; Lk. 21:1–4): God is not impressed with percentages, until it becomes a sacrifice to the one giving it.
- B. Give as God has Prospered You (1 Cor. 16:2): we should give according to how God has blessed us. If He's blessed us with much, we should give much. If He's blessed us with little, then we should give little.
- C. Forethought in Giving (2 Cor. 9:7a): our giving should not be last minute; it should be preplanned.
- D. If You Sow Sparingly, You'll Reap Sparingly (2 Cor. 9:6): those who give little will get little and those who give much will get much.

### III. MONEY AND WEALTH

- A. Money is Not the Root of All Evil, 1 Tim. 6:8–10: the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil (***love of money*** meaning *avarice: an insatiable greed for riches; inordinate, miserly desire to gain and hoard wealth*).

*Love of money* changes people and situations. You can lose a friend over it. *Love of money* causes people to cling to their money and desire more. It causes awful behavior: someone will keep track of how many times they treat you and expect to be treated in return, someone may have an abundance of money, but they won't spend it, even on legitimate family needs, etc.

- B. What is the Proper Attitude towards Money and Wealth? It's a blessing from God, Eccl. 5:19. You can pursue wealth, but not selfishly, Mtt. 6:20; Lk. 12:16–21. You should know how much you have and manage it well, Prov. 27:23–27. One should be generous with it, Ps. 112; Prov. 11:24–25; 22:9; Acts 20:32–35. It is to be enjoyed, Deut. 28:47; Eccl. 5:18–20; 1 Tim. 6:17. Don't have an evil eye, i.e., be a miser, Deut 15:9; Prov 28:22; Mtt 6:23.

There may be evil wealthy people, but wealth in and of itself is not evil. Rather, it's a gift from God, a gift one can pursue, but not selfishly. Wealth is something that needs to be properly managed; you should know how much comes in and goes out. When the Lord blesses you with wealth, share it, and He'll bless you with more. And you don't necessarily have to be wealthy to share what you have, for *it is more blessed to give than to receive*.

Something else God wants you to do with your wealth: enjoy it. He blessed you with it but rather than boasting or trusting in it, He wants you to enjoy it. Lastly, you are not to have an *evil eye*, i.e., be a miser, with your wealth.

### IV. GIVING: SHOULD I BE AS GENEROUS AS GOD?

- A. Tithing: Trends in Tithing, a study by The Barna Group:

The Barna Group is a marketing research firm that primarily focuses on church related issues, but has worked with secular companies like Disney and Sony. In April 14, 2008 they reported their findings on a study they did regarding tithing and donating trends (<http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/18-congregations/41-new-study-shows-trends-in-tithing-and-donating>). Depending on how one understands the study, in 2007 at best only 24% of evangelicals tithed (i.e., gave 10% of their income).

Why mention this study? Have you ever looked at what you give in comparison to your annual income? This is something everyone should know. If you're giving blindly (i.e., without looking at your income), then you may find yourself shocked at the percentage you actually give. Knowing this information is necessary in order to fulfill such giving principles as 1 Cor. 16:2 which teaches us to give according to how God has blessed us.

B. How does God Give? (2 Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2:5–8; Jam. 1:5)

Our goal is to emulate God in every aspect of our lives. Thus, we should ask, “How does God give?” Is He generous? Does He pay attention to percentages?

When it comes to giving, God provides a model for us to follow: His Son, 2 Cor. 8:9. When man needed salvation, Did Christ ask, “how much do you need Father, is it 10% or a bit more?”? No, He emptied His bank account in order to make us rich. How did He empty His bank account? He, the God of the universe, became a man, but not a wealthy, powerful man, a poor ordinary man, who gave His life that we might live, Phil. 2:5–8.

How does God give? He gives generously (Jam. 1:5). He doesn't pay attention to percentages, He just gives and gives and gives.

C. So How Much Should I Give?

We see that God is generous in His giving. Thus, we should be generous in ours. As we look at the giving principles in the New Testament, we notice a common thread in many of them. In Mk. 12:41–44 the widow gave all she had—generosity. In Acts 2:45, the people sold their possessions to give to the church—generosity. In 2 Cor. 8:1–3, the churches of Macedonia, though being poor and suffering themselves, gave beyond their ability—generosity. In 2 Cor. 8:9, God uses His Son as the standard of giving—generosity. In 2 Cor. 9:5, generosity marked the gift the Corinthians gave their suffering brethren in Jerusalem. In 2 Cor. 9:6, God calls us to a spirit of generosity in our giving. In 2 Cor 9:8–10, though God asks us to give to Him, He first gives generously to us.

So if we're supposed to be generous like God, does it mean we have to give more than 10%? How much should we give, what's the percentage? First, Scripture doesn't reveal a percentage that we must give today. The only percentage mentioned is 10%, but wherever Scripture speaks of it (whether it be Abraham's or Jacob's tithe or the tithes in the Mosaic Law), it is not presented as a mandate for the Church. Second, your giving will fluctuate; it won't always be the same. Sometimes you will give 1% because that's all you can give. Sometimes you'll give 20%, 30%, 50% or more because that's how God has prospered you.

But before focusing on a percentage, first, you should focus on your attitude when you give. God wants you to be joyful, 2 Cor. 9:7. Second, like God you should strive to have an underlying attitude of generosity as God has towards you, 2 Cor. 8:9; Jam. 1:5.

V. **CONCLUSION**

Though we do not have a specified percentage or figure that God requires us to give, He has not left us without instruction. First, it is important to have the right perspective on the money/wealth God gives us. Second, we should seek to emulate God's generosity as we apply the giving principles He lays out in Scripture. When we focus on these things, the dollar amount will take care of itself.