

Godly Giving to the Church

Paul – talking about gifts in Romans 12 says *If someone's gift.... Is contributing... let them give generously*

I believe in giving to the church you belong to – you give to God's work and mission for the furthering of His Kingdom. It may not be the only giving you do but it's important not to neglect that part of it. It's that giving that enables us to push forward in Ministry and Mission – all giving goes to help the furthering of God's Kingdom both here and further afield.

The committed Christian is a generous Christian. They are generous in many ways but primarily here we're looking at the gift of giving in terms of finance – being a person of generosity. We don't overly talk about finance in church services but Jesus, Paul and elsewhere in the Bible it's not shied away from. As we look at the world around us – we need to pray, we need to fast, we need to serve – but we also **NEED TO FINANCE THE MISSION AND MINISTRY OF GOD AS BORN OUT IN THE CHURCH WE BELONG TO.**

People feel threatened when being asked for money – but let's take what is threatening to be thrilling.

Most Christians don't tithe – give 10% of their income to the church they are part of – many could give more but use the tithe as 'I've done my bit' – treating it like a church tax – paying what I must.

R.T. Kendall was Minister of Westminster Chapel – his teaching on this has been endorsed by George Carey, Billy Graham, John Stott...

It is very likely that a big hitch in your Christian growth has to do with fidelity in stewardship of money. Sooner or later every Christian comes face to face with the use of their money. And what happens then? Either they will squarely and honestly face their Christian responsibility or they will draw back. If they draw back from this responsibility it is not likely that anything they do will work or compensate for their refusal to come to grips with the stewardship of money.

Who among us at one time or another has not sought to use one form of obedience to offset a deficiency in another area? I don't tithe but I go to church three times a week. I don't tithe but I bring people to church, I don't tithe but I read and pray more than most people do....

Does it work – no it does not. We who do 'more in our Christian

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when we are aware of some form of disobedience in our Christian lives are not talking to God but ourselves. We really project upon God what we hope He is thinking. It is nothing but playing games with God – and ourselves.

I am sure that becoming a tither provides a definite breakthrough for every Christian. It unlocks the door of the mind, heart and will. It releases. It emancipates. It frees. Becoming a tither is a milestone in a Christian's life.
(The Gift of Giving by R.T. Kendall)

Malachi 3:10 *Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.*

Is the storehouse the church?

R.T. Kendall says yes and most biblical scholars would not differ on the point that the New Testament ministry succeeded that of the Levitical priesthood. When Paul claimed that *they who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel* (1 Cor. 9:14), he was actually commentating on the way the Levitical priesthood was sustained.

1 Cor.9:9 in talking about ministry is a quotation from Deuteronomy 25:4 *do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain*

Paul also used Deut.25:4 in support of his claim (1 Tim.5:17–18) *The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honour, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, do not muzzle the ox while it is treading the grain and the worker deserves his wages.*

1 Cor.9:13–14 is also followed by an appeal to Leviticus 6:6 when he asked

Don't you know that those who work in the temple get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar. In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.

R.T. Kendall sums it up well:

By supporting your individual church then – you support the ministry of your church but also provide funds for your church to send the Gospel (both locally) and around the world.

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Carl Bates summed it up this way:

God has always had a 'place' for holy money to be put. In the O/T that place that place was the tabernacle and the temple. In the New Testament that place was and is the church. I have searched the Scriptures where the tithe was 'designated' (i.e. given elsewhere). Offerings (extra), yes, but not the tithe.

In other words, the tithe is to be entrusted to the Church that the Church may make the proper decisions as to its use.

Jesus (Matthew 6:2) says **when** *you give* (not if!!)

2 Cor.8:3 *For I testify they gave as much as they were able*

2 Cor.8:7 *But just as you excel in everything... see that you also excel in this grace of giving*

2 Cor.9:6–7 *Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each one should give what's been decided in their heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*

2 Cor.10–11 *Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and*

will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

Jesus (Matthew 6:19–21) *Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will also be.*

Read Matthew 6:1–4 – Giving (what follows is prayer and fasting – we wouldn't neglect those!!)

Giving – part of our secret life with God – Jesus says 'when (not if) you give' (2)

How not to give (2)

A devout Jew would give in two ways

- Tithing – i.e. a tenth of his income (compulsory)
- Alms (voluntary) – more than required
- Realistically – a devout Jew would give away at least one-sixth of his income

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- To the Jews giving was a sacred religious duty
- But, as important as the Rabbis said giving was, they were against ostentatious giving
- Jesus not denouncing the teaching of the Rabbis but the way the Pharisees fell short of the teaching and were hypocritical (v2)
- Of course – figurative – it means to avoid self-righteousness, self-congratulation and pride
- 2 Cor 9:7 ‘God loves a cheerful giver’ – giving out of thanksgiving – as a response to His love – IT’S A HEART THING
- When done in this way Jesus says ‘Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you’ (4)

The Greek word for ‘hypocrite’ was used for an actor in a play – means someone pretending to be someone they’re not

V2 – Jesus shows that the Pharisees were parading themselves – announcing with trumpets – making sure they were seen in what was supposed to be their secret life with God – Blowing their own trumpet!

We’re not to do that – God knows what’s done in secret (4)

If we give to seek the praise of others then that’ll be our reward (2)

How to Give (3–4)

- Jesus says that when we give, we shouldn’t only not tell others but also to not tell ourselves! ‘Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing (3)
- Why Paul says not to give ‘*reluctantly or under compulsion*’ (7) ‘Whistle while you write!’
- Receiving presents is fun – giving also is good

Rewards?

Teaching of Paul (2 Cor. 9:6–15)

1. Good Investment – ‘*Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously*’ (not prosperity Gospel)
2. We’ll know God’s Love – ‘*for God loves a cheerful giver*’ (7)

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3. Giving changes your Character

- *'He... will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness'* (2 Cor 9:10)
- Helps us combat materialism

4. privilege of seeing others thanking God for the gift

2 Cor 9:11b–13a 'so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God'

Reward of knowing that 'we are supplying the needs of God's people' (2 Cor 9:12)

- We're part of the Community of the Church as we share in its needs – ministry, service, building (serves the church – is not the church)

THERE'S MUCH WORK TO BE DONE – BUT IT TAKES FINANCE!!

Everything you give into the life of this church (the storehouse) is used for mission and ministry – we actually are doing a lot. We're doing more now than ever before. BUT –

along with prayer and service it needs FINANCE.

Mission and Ministry – all for the purposes of the church – all to be measured against 'to know Jesus and make Him known' – and The Great Commission

Alpha, Baby Club (PS) , little Lights (Tuesday Toddlers PS), CTB, Global Café, HBC, Holiday at Home, Sunny Days, Tuesday Club, catering, flowers, mini-bus, licenses for worship, CAP courses, Prison Ministry, SMB, Street Pastors, BU Home Mission, Magazine, equipment, big mission partner budget (bigger than any church we're aware of), Kingdom Kids – Light Party – the list could go on.

2020 – first time we've had a full staff since 2007 – 13 years!!

Invested in children's worker – would love more – always invested in youth and children – other churches decreased and are suffering – have an admin (used to be voluntary) – we now have an additional building with its associated ministry and outreach which needs upkeep along with Perry Street. Ministers – being available, being visible, being able to visit these groups... to prepare and preach God's Word, to lead etc. Would love to do more – CARE Marriage, parenting courses....

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ALL THIS IS MISSION AND MINISTRY – mission and ministry is not ‘what’s left’ – it’s 100%

Alan shared at the budget last year that we were as a church prepared and equipped to run a deficit during 2019 & 2020 anticipating a return to a break-even position in 2021. This required a 4% increase in giving during 2019 (all but achieved to the end of September), and an 8% increase in 2020 and again in 2021.

We are currently working on next year’s budget and it looks like we will need to see offerings increase by around 8% to 10% to keep us on track. Alan shared this at the November Church Members Meeting. We have for some time carried a large reserve, but by clearing our pension liability and investing in kingdom business we are, for the first time in a long time, being challenged in our giving so that we can strive first for the kingdom and further the mission and ministry from this church. Mission is overseas – yes – but it’s also on our doorstep – in all the things that have been mentioned. Mission and ministry cost, and reserves don’t last forever and so without those increases in income, in a year or two we have to scale

back and look where we can make the books balance. What we’d rather do is look forward with confidence and not let finance hold us back.

So – giving is important, not to be shied away from – there’s a challenge for all of us

Christian tradition of the Tithe – first ten percent

- O/T Genesis 14:17–20, Genesis 28:18–22, Leviticus 27:30–33, Numbers 18:21–32, Deuteronomy 12:5–19, Deuteronomy 14:22–29, Deuteronomy 26:12–15, Deuteronomy 16:13–17, 2 Chronicles 31:4–12, Nehemiah 10:36–39, Nehemiah 12:44 – Prophets Amos 4:4, Malachi 3:8–12
- Now we have The Holy Spirit and are part of the New Covenant
- Not prescriptive – maybe a guide? – Although Jesus did talk about tithing.... He assumed it
- Jacob the swindler gave a tenth, Zacchæus the despised Tax Collector gave a half – the widow ‘all she had to live on’ (Mark 12:44), the devout Jew at least a sixth of his income

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- If we take the teachings of Jesus into our hearts we'll realise that to enter into the arguments about percentages is to miss the point.
- Maybe it's not 'what do I have to give away' but 'how much do I need to keep?'
- Paul says 'each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give' (2 Corinthians 9:7)

Giving as Sacrificial and Generous

Our giving is not for the praise of people, nor for self-congratulation, but before God who sees our heart and knows what and who we are in our secret life with Him.

That's why our giving is an act of worship so think about your giving.

Where you give elsewhere because church funds have been good – revisit – remember the tithe is for the storehouse – the mission and ministry of this church – it's not biblical to disseminate or dilute that – this is a challenge.

Mission is local not just for mission partners or overseas – we need to give God what's right – not what's left.

As a Leadership we're committed to be good stewards – looking at all areas

But – let's take to what to many is threatening and make it thrilling.

Imagine what could be done if we were really sacrificial in our giving – there would be no deficits – we wouldn't hold back – we'd not be cutting budgets – we could increase our mission and ministry.

A sobering thought for me when I first looked at this – I've already quoted Malachi 3:10 *bring the whole tithe into the storehouse* and that the storehouse is the church.

Look what comes before in Malachi 3:8–9 *Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, 'how do we rob you?' You are under a curse – the whole nation of you – because you are robbing me...*

God says we are robbing him if we withhold the tithe – it's not mine in the first place!! – that shakes me – what about you? ■