



## A Guide to Giving

### What Does the Bible Say About Money?

If there is one thing that is sure to make many people uncomfortable in the church, it is when anyone starts talking about money. Christians love hearing about grace and forgiveness, about God's love and His great plan for our lives - we can even handle thinking about our sin and selfishness. But when the subject is money, almost everyone gets nervous. Some people even get angry. It can be a touchy subject, and that leads to an unfortunate tendency to shy away from that conversation altogether.

In contrast, the Bible is full of talk about money. The Old Testament is packed with passages about money and possessions: regulations for various kinds of offerings, and stories of sacrifices, generosity, giving and greed. New Testament voices had much to say about money as well. In fact, in all the recorded words of Jesus Himself, we find that He talked more about money than about Heaven and Hell combined! Why is money such a big deal to God?

Jesus offers clear insight into this in the Sermon on the Mount, recorded in Matthew. In chapter 6:19-21 it says, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. Rather store for yourselves treasure in Heaven, where moth and rust cannot destroy, and thieves cannot break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." God knows us; He knows our natures and tendencies, and how we think. He knows that money easily becomes tangled up in our hearts and minds with security, power and position.

Money holds a danger of becoming much more than an innocuous thing for the buying and selling of goods. In fact, the Bible tells us that the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil (1 Timothy 6:10). Read that carefully - money itself isn't the root of evil. It is the love of money, a danger which lurks around rich

and poor alike. This means, at the very least, that money is something we need to be careful about, and something that we certainly need to give forethought and regular attention to as people who seek to follow God.

## **Lord of All**

Jesus is inviting us to be a people who shock the world with the graciousness, generosity and love of God and His people, and who invite everyone, everywhere to join us as we walk with Him.

This is where the teaching about a Christian and his money gets very real and personal. When I accept Jesus' grace and work on the cross, He is my Savior. If I want to walk with Him and be His disciple, He must also be my Lord. The original disciples left everything they had to follow Him. What does this mean for me? The Lordship of Christ means so much more than just striving to be a moral and generous person. It means that everything I have - my thoughts, dreams, possessions, and life - all belongs to Him. Yes, even my money belongs to Him, and I am merely a steward of His resources. There is such freedom in this way of thinking! My life isn't about the accumulation and maintenance of wealth and stuff, it is about knowing Jesus and making Him known.

## **Giving and the Individual Christian**

**A Generous Nature** Followers of Jesus are different, literally by nature. In accepting Christ as Savior and Lord, we no longer live as a slave to our own sinful nature. We have been set free from that, and have been given the very nature of Christ. We should strive to be imitators of Christ - no longer selfish, but full of grace and concern for others. This applies to my money, time and possessions. My life must not reflect a huge imbalance in how I spend all of my resources. If I am hoarding my time, money and possessions for myself then something is wrong. God calls us to come up higher and not live like the rest of the world lives, but to be unselfish and generous in everything.

## Tithes

This tried-and-true Old Testament practice serves today as a fantastic starting point for every believer. How do you do it? Simply give ten percent of your income to your church (tithes means a tenth). For example, when you get paid \$200, give \$20 back to God. This is how the church operates, by the generosity and giving of her people. In a traditional church in your community, the pastors receive their wages, the electric bill is paid, and all of the programs of the church are funded by the giving of the people. In Chi Alpha, the tithes received do not pay the wages of the pastors and staff (more about that shortly), but they do pay for the Chi Alpha building and all of its upkeep, as well as fund all of the outreach that we do on campus. Parties, fellowship events, Welcome Week, evangelistic outreaches, the upkeep of the building where so many ministers are trained and where so many small groups meet - all of the things we do throughout the year are funded by students' giving.

What does tithing look like for someone who has never tried before? Simply write a check, or put cash in an envelope and give it to your church or Chi Alpha group - oftentimes, you can even give online ([givexa.com](http://givexa.com)). The actual giving part is easy once you determine in your heart to be a giver. Giving is a spiritual discipline, and through it we show God how thankful we are for His provision. Again, God doesn't actually need our money, but He delights in men and women who have thankful hearts and love His Church enough to bless it materially. It pleases God when we are disciplined to plan our budget and lifestyle to include and make room for generosity and Kingdom-mindedness. God promises in the Bible that no one can out-give Him, and a multitude of believers can tell you from personal experience that when you give to God, the conduit for Him to bless you is opened. If you have not been participating in supporting the ministry, now is a great time to start!

\*Important Note to Students: this does not apply to loan money! That is not income - please use loan money as infrequently and sparingly as possible.

## Offerings

Ten percent is a great starting place, but imagine what could be done if all Christians gave like the widow at the temple, who Jesus commended for giving all. (Luke 21: 1-4). Let's consider missions for a moment. If you have been in the church and/or Chi Alpha for very long, I hope you have at least heard about

the concept of missions. Jesus has asked us to share the Gospel (the good news) with everyone in the world. There is an incredible passage in Romans chapter 10 in which the Apostle Paul says, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent?"

This should challenge and inspire all of us who are followers of Jesus. Paul's logic is flawless - if we do not send the preachers then the people will not hear the Good News. Conversely, if we do send preachers, then people will hear, and many will respond! It is as simple as that. Beyond our ten percent, we have the incredible opportunity to give as much as we will through extra offerings to propel the beautiful message of Christ to the ends of the earth.

Here are some suggestions on what to do with your offerings.

**Missionary Pledges** As mentioned above, Chi Alpha pastors and staff do not receive their wages through the regular tithes of students. All who work with Chi Alpha are technically missionaries, and raise support from individuals and churches. Chi Alpha missionaries and other types of missionaries headed overseas also receive their wages through monthly support. There is much said in the Bible about ministry being funded in this manner. It is a wonderful opportunity for everyone to be involved in the spreading of the Good News.

What does supporting a missionary look like? It is simple. Ask anyone who works with Chi Alpha if you can have one of their pledge forms, and watch their face light up! A faith promise is making a pledge to give financially and to pray for that missionary in their work. Who has ministered to you? Who has helped you grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ? What campus or country do have a burden for? These questions can help guide you to the right missionaries to support. Perhaps it will be your small group or resource group leader - it is always a good idea to bless the Lord by blessing the people who have invested into your own life. In fact, it would honestly be rather selfish to reap the benefits of your friend's sacrifice and service in your own life and then give them nothing in return. Their work is worthy of our support. Or perhaps it will be someone in your own small group. If God calls someone you have

already invested in, it would make good sense to continue your investment in their life and ministry.

Let me encourage you to see this support pledge to be very long term. Your time on campus may be short, but missionary service is for life. Join support teams and stay on them, faithfully sowing into ministry with your finances and prayers year-in and year-out. Might I add that this also applies to those of us who become missionaries ourselves? We should be the most generous of all in our support of others, for we know what a tremendous blessing and encouragement it is to have brothers and sisters on your team.

**Missionary Offerings.** Just like missions pledges, special offerings to missionaries or ministries are above and beyond our usual tithe. When you are blessed with an unexpected income or surplus, what a gesture of thanksgiving it would be to bless the missionaries and/or the ministries that you support with an extra gift. How encouraging for the people on the front lines of the battle to receive birthday or Christmas gifts from their support team members. The possibilities here to bless our missionaries and ministries are endless. The idea is to cultivate a generous and giving nature - the nature of Christ in us.

Which leads to one last point for thought in this section of Giving and the Individual Christian. When discussing generosity, there is so much more to consider than just money. All of us are stewards of many things in life - money, time, our possessions, even our work - the list is long. We all have much to spend, and ought to be careful and thoughtful of how we are spending the resources that God has entrusted to us. Like missionary William Borden famously wrote within the cover of his Bible - "No Reserves, No Retreats, No Regrets," and like the widow in the temple, let's give all. Jesus is worth it.

### **Corporate Giving**

Just like individuals, whole bodies of believers can also be active participants in giving. Churches and Chi Alpha groups can pay a tithe of their offerings, can support missionaries monthly, and can take special offerings for missions and projects. The idea here, and we must remember that it is God's idea, is an attitude and posture of gratefulness, thanksgiving, and unselfishness. Nothing

is individually or corporately "ours" - it all belongs to Him, and we should seek to be like Him in our generosity.

One added consideration here - think with me about a dream we have had for many years. God is doing something wonderful and unusual on our campus. Thousands of men and women have had their hearts and lives changed forever in Jesus, and many have been called into the ministry. What could we do for the Kingdom if we together took missions pledges and giving seriously? For example, what if just 300 of us took this idea of living generously and sacrificially seriously and gave \$300 dollars a month for the rest of our lives to missions? It sounds like a lot, but it isn't too much at all for most of us. Most could save at least that much per month easily by buying a more modest home, a used car, and canceling satellite tv. Three hundred people giving \$300 a month to missions is \$1,080,000 per year. That is a lot of sending! Or what if we got incredibly bold and 500 of us arranged our finances and expenses to be able to give \$500 a month? Again, not outlandish for most professionals, and that number would yield \$3 million per year in missions pledges - from just 500 people.

God has a big dream of seeing every man, woman and child with Him forever in Heaven, and graciously invites us to have the incredible honor of helping Him fulfill this dream. He has done His part - now will we do ours?