

TEN PRINCIPLES *of* Christian Giving

*Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory
and the victory and the majesty,
for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours.
Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all.*

1 CHRONICLES 29:11

ONE, our Lord Jesus expects and requires us to give.

Jesus said to his disciples, “*whenever* you practice charitable giving” not *if* you give (Matthew 6:2; see also v.3). Hence, Christian giving is not optional. Rather, it is an essential part of Christian discipleship. Some people may say, ‘In the Old Testament they were required to give, but not in the New – now we give only if we want to.’ But this is not what Jesus taught; he expected that all his followers would be givers. Christians ought to give.

TWO, our Lord Jesus wants us to give for the right reasons.

Jesus warned his disciples not to give for the sake of being admired by others. “Take care not to practice your righteousness [here that means ‘do your giving’] before people to be seen by them,” Jesus said (Matthew 6:1). When we give, we must be careful to examine our motives. We ought to give for the glory of God and for the good of our neighbor. We must desire God’s approval of our giving rather than the praise and admiration of people.

THREE, our Lord wants us to practice benevolent or charitable giving.

As we have seen, our Lord Jesus said, “Whenever you practice charitable giving...” Jesus is specifically talking there about ‘alms’: aid, charity, or benevolent offerings for the poor – those who lack the basic necessities of life (see Matthew 25:34-46; James 2:14-16). We give to care for our building and our pastor, yes. But, as the people of God, we also have an individual and corporate responsibility to

care for the material needs of the poor and needy – our neighbors. Are we committed to obeying this mandate from our Lord?

FOUR, our Lord Jesus reminds us that giving is ultimately to our all-seeing heavenly Father, and that it is a means of grace.

Again, in Matthew 6, Jesus says, “When you practice charitable giving... your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” Giving is an act of obedience, an act of love towards God and neighbor. And, as an ordinance of Christ for his church, giving is one of the outward and ordinary means of grace. Jesus does not specify the nature of the reward, but God is no one’s debtor, and as someone has put it, we may understand that it will be ‘both in time and in eternity.’

FIVE, the Scriptures teach that giving is an act of worship. The gifts are holy and a response to God’s generosity towards us.

Moses taught the children of Israel that “any tithe of the land...is for the LORD; it is a holy object for the LORD” (Leviticus 27:30). Here, ‘holy’ means set apart, dedicated to a purpose. In Deuteronomy 15, the Lord’s commands to be generous were accompanied by a reminder: “Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you; therefore I am commanding you thus today” (v.15). Obedient giving in love is a response of thankful worship to our God who saves (see also 1 John 3:16-18).

SIX, the Scriptures teach that giving should be done in light of the Incarnation and Atonement of Christ.

Christians disagree about whether the tithe (10% of our increase) is still the standard for our giving to the Church. Paul settles the argument in one verse, “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that although he was rich, for your sake he became poor, in order that you, by his poverty, may become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9; see also 1 John 3:16-18). In this passage on generosity in giving, Paul encouraged the Corinthians to give so that they might “excel in this grace also” (v. 7) as they did in others. Christian giving is not a matter of achieving some specific percentage. No, it is a loving, obedient act of worship in response to Jesus’ self-giving on our behalf.

SEVEN, the Scriptures teach that giving should be done in accordance with our means.

Paul is clear about this: “If the eagerness [to give] is present, [the gift] is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have” (2 Corinthians 8:12). The Lord doesn’t require more than one has to give. Willingness to give generously is

pleasing to God, even if the gift be small. Paul also teaches, “Each one of you put aside something, saving up to whatever extent he has prospered” (1 Corinthians 16:2). Paul is making two points: (1) those who have more are expected to give more, and (2) the Lord never asks us to give what we do not have or to contribute beyond our means.

EIGHT, the Scriptures teach that the liberality of God’s blessing to us is somehow connected with the liberality of our Christian giving.

Paul noted “the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully” (2 Corinthians 9:6). And Jesus taught, “your Father who sees in secret will reward you” (Matthew 6:4). It’s as someone once said, ‘The desire to be generous and the means to be generous both come from God.’

NINE, the Scriptures teach that Christian giving should be willing and free.

The Apostle Paul teaches, “Each one should give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or from compulsion” (2 Corinthians 9:7). From the first principle we learned that giving is a required part of Christian discipleship. Now we learn that we are to give freely and willingly. This is one of the Christian paradoxes that the world can’t understand. It’s similar to the truth that God is at the same time 100% just and 100% merciful, or that Jesus is the God-man, fully God and fully man. Christian giving is at once both mandatory and voluntary.

TEN, the Scriptures teach that Christian giving ought to be cheerful as they give.

As Paul says, “God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7).