

# The Gifts of Giving

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Special Speaker: Josh Kelley

## LET'S TALK ABOUT \$

Money is a weird thing. More so, it makes us act weird, especially if you're as cheap as me. I'll spend \$50 on a nice dinner but then struggle to add an extra dollar on the tip.

- I've never let a bell boy carry my luggage - I'd rather carry 75 lbs. or up four flights of stairs.

This morning we're talking about money, specifically giving, and specifically supporting our church.

- Just so you know, the exits have been locked.

I've said before that sin is not a random collection of things God tells us not to do. Rather, He found all the things that damage us, damage others, and dishonor Him and call that sin.

The converse is true: Whenever God tells us to do something, we find our obedience benefits us, benefits others, and glorifies Him.

So, since God commands us to give and support His work, we can assume that it is for our benefit. Just as surely as to our benefit to forgive, not commit adultery, or not lie.

His command to give is a gift to us: a gift to us personally, to our church family, and to God.

## 1. GLORIFIES GOD

First of all, and most importantly, giving glorifies God.

In the OT, God used the sacrifices and offerings to support the priests' ministry to the people of Israel. But that was a byproduct: they were primarily an act of worship.

God watched as their motivation shifted from heart-felt devotion to half-hearted duty, evidenced by the gifts they brought.

When you give blind animals as sacrifices, isn't that wrong? And isn't it wrong to offer animals that are crippled and diseased? Try giving gifts like that to your governor, and see how pleased he is! *Malachi 1:8 NLT*

They should have brought their very best to God, yet instead they brought the animals that were dying. The animals' lack of value showed that they did not value God.

I once gave Marilyn flowers left at the church after a funeral. It didn't have the desired response - I think she was on to me.

- Must be her women's intuition, or maybe the "sympathy card."

In stark contrast to dying animals and re-gifted flowers, stands King David, a "man after God's own heart." Once he was about to offer a sacrifice and someone offered to donate the animals.

No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing. *2 Samuel 24:23-24 NIV*

Now, as then, giving is a *costly* act of worship and as such it honors and glorifies God in a way that singing cannot.

- We worship God with the fruit of our mouth and the fruit of our labor.

## 2. GIFT TO OUR CHURCH FAMILY

Giving is a gift to God, but it is also a gift to our church family. In the OT and NT, tithes and offerings were how God provided for the spiritual care of His people.

Don't you know that...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. *1 Corinthians 9:13 NIV*

- God wants His work to be supported by His people.

There's an unconscious misperception that "no matter what I give to the church, God will provide." He *could* provide, but He often doesn't. But He also *could* have angels preach the Gospel.

- To us, that may seem more effective; but God's more interested in maturity than efficiency.
- God works *through* us in order to work *in* us. [Repeat with me]

It is our privilege to be Christ's body, speaking His words, being His hands, and being His provision.

Another misperception is that normal operating costs don't apply to churches. It takes money to have a building, make utility payments, pay staff, and generally do ministry.

- Now that I work here, I really appreciate the "business" side of church.

Our budget for this year is \$1,150,000; divided by 12 months: \$95,833; divided by our average total attendance of 1,300: It costs \$74 per man, woman, and child a month to do the work God's called us to.

- For my family of four, that comes out to \$296 a month.

## TITHE SERMONS

As church, we're very sensitive about how we talk about giving. There is a strong perception in our world that churches are "out for your money" and we know there are always visitors here.

- That's why we always tell visitors to let the basket pass.

In the 8 ½ years, we've only had 3 sermons on giving; this one of them. That doesn't mean we don't teach about it. Bruce has made sure that we have two teachings on giving every week.

**Q:** Do you know when they are?

- First, by taking the offering during our time of praise, we teach that giving is an act of our worship.
- Second, by telling the visitors not to give, we are teaching that attenders should. Regulars are responsible to support their church.

There are two ways I can view the offering:

1. As an admission price – ain't bad show for a buck.
2. A concrete way to support and invest in my church.

\$74 pp, per month is no small investment. It says "I believe in what's going on here and I want to be a part. I want to help advance the kingdom of God from this corner."

### 3. GIFT TO US

Finally, it is a gift to us personally. Have you ever played the "\$1,000,000 game"? What would you do if you won a million?

- How much money do you think you would have to have before you stopped playing that game?
- We always want more – it's called greed.

If you're poor, you want to be middle class. If you're middle class, you want to be rich. If you're rich, you want to be stinkin' rich. If you're stinkin' rich, you want to be filthy rich. You're filthy rich, you want to be Bill Gates.

But what does Bill want? A good marriage, well-adjusted kids, to help people...and for Apple to go bankrupt.

Money is dangerous to our soul. It doesn't matter if you have it or want it.

- Chasing money becomes idolatry.

You cannot serve both God and Money. *Matthew 6:24 NIV*

- Having money erodes dependency on God.

...give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the LORD?' *Proverbs 30:8-9 NIV*

Notice I didn't say that money is "bad." I said it is dangerous. Electricity is very dangerous, but also holds tremendous potential to accomplish good.

- Money can destroy us or help others.

Generous giving breaks the hold of money on my soul. Giving is an act of faith, recognizing that God will take care of me.

## BETTER TO GIVE

What's more, the very act of giving is blessing to the giver.

**Q:** Who first said "It's better to give than receive?"

...remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" *Acts 20:35 NIV*

It is in our wiring to enjoy giving. Why? Because we were made in God's image, and He is creation's most generous giver.

- When we give to a good cause with a good heart we imitate our Father.

## GIVING GUIDELINES

So how much should you give? The word "tithes" means "ten percent." Some believe it is an OT rule made obsolete by the NT, while others regard it as a sound Biblical guideline.

- We teach that goal isn't a number, it's an attitude.

Paul gave three basic principles that we should pursue: give consistently, give proportionally, and give sacrificially.

Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income... *1 Corinthians 16:1-2 NIV*

For I testify that [the Philippians] gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. *2 Corinthians 8:3 NIV*

If you're not yet giving consistently, proportionally, and sacrificially, my challenge to you is that you sit down with your family and prayerfully consider your giving to your church.

Obviously this has a significant impact on this church; our offerings directly controls how much ministry we can do.

- Just as importantly, it will have a significant impact on you.
- And if you are a visitor, please let this pass you by - this message is for those who call His Place their place.