



## Summary Perspective on Giving<sup>1</sup>

1. Giving is an act of worship in response to the grace of God (Acts 4:33). As a result, giving ought to be done through an attitude of joy and gratitude, not reluctantly or out of compulsion (2 Corinthians 9:7).
2. Christians are not bound by the Old Testament command to give 10% of their income in the same way as OT believers. Rather, the New Testament sets a new standard that *adds to* that OT standard. The new standard is not a set percentage, but instead a posture of *sacrificial giving* (Acts 2, 4:2 Corinthians 8-9). That is, giving to the point of sacrifice.
3. In the Old Testament, we learned that God's people gave their 10% in response to God's goodness, even though they had not yet experienced the work of Christ. However, we *have* experienced that work! Therefore, we should not think God ought to require *less* of his people now when he has given far *more*. As a result, giving 10% of our income as an offering to God is a good starting point.

## G.I.V.E. Principles

With all that in mind, how much then *should* we give? In order to answer that question well, consider these G.I.V.E. principles:

**Generous + sacrificial:** Being generous and sacrificial *always* requires some kind of *lifestyle change*, otherwise it is not generous or sacrificial (Luke 21:1-4, 2 Corinthians 8:2). For some, due to extenuating circumstances (e.g. temporary times of joblessness, severe underemployment, unexpected healthcare bills, etc.), 10% is literally a financial impossibility in that season; those who cannot commit to 10% in the present *can still commit to growing into* an offering of (at least) 10%, as the Lord enables. For others, 10% is exactly the right percentage for them to be generous and sacrificial. For others, 10% is not nearly enough, as it doesn't fulfill the New Testament imperative of "sacrificial giving" as 10% for them would be "just a drop in the bucket of what they *could* give." In sum, Christians ought to live below what their income could afford because of how much they give away.

**Intentional + prayerful:** Believers should not be haphazard with giving but instead should intentionally sit down with their budget and prayerfully consider how they spend the resources with which God has entrusted them. Then, they will be prepared to determine the amount/percentage they will give.

**Voluntary First Fruits:** When a believer has committed to sacrificial generosity, they also commit to giving their gift first, not last. That means, not making the gift the last thing given as though it is a "leftover," but instead making it a first priority: automatic. This is the OT concept of the First Fruits, which meant giving God one's "best of the best" gift. Practically, this could mean making our giving the top line of our budget. That is, we take out 10% of the budget and then craft our budget with the rest. Another consideration in modern day is to commit to automatic, first-fruit offerings.

**Expectation from God:** When we've committed to honor God in our finances, we can expect God will lead us in that commitment and provide. While we do not believe Scripture binds one's conscience to give 100% of one's entire *tithe*/offering to the local church, Scripture does present a precedent and priority for financially supporting one's own local church. While God is certainly at work outside of the local church, the New Testament teaches the primary way Jesus' Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20) is accomplished is through the establishment and support of the local church (1 Corinthians 9:9-14). A believer is part of God's Kingdom work and one's church is where one worships, receives spiritual feeding, and participates in God's Kingdom work by ministering to others. As a result, believers should invest financially in their local church's work. After ensuring one's church has been supported, a believer should then give elsewhere, as God leads. A popular rule of thumb—though not an obligation—is to give at least 10% to one's own church and then give above and beyond to other ministries as God leads.

<sup>1</sup> For more on our perspective on giving, listen to Pastor Justin's sermon, "Extraordinary Generosity."

## Answering Objections:

Giving is an act of worship *in response* to the goodness and grace of God. Period. If we cannot give cheerfully, as opposed to reluctantly or out of compulsion (2 Corinthians 9:7), then we must ask God for his Holy Spirit to change our hearts to honor His will in that area of our lives.

The practice of giving is just like any other spiritual discipline/practice necessary for growth as a Christian. For example, we should prod our hearts if we find ourselves without desires to know the Word of God, spend time in prayer, or be part of Christian community or gathered, public worship. Giving, much like these other practices, is a way that we worship God: by trusting he will conform us to the image of His Son. And yes, God makes us more like His sacrificial loving Son, as we strive to be sacrificial, cheerful givers.

There are several common objections from those who do not give. Let us briefly address several of them: (1) “the church seems fine without my giving”, (2) “I cannot afford to give,” or (3) “I do not trust the church to use my money well.”

**“The church seems fine without my giving”:** This assumes that giving is *primarily* for the purpose of supporting the church. It is not. While financial gifts are the way God determined His Church be supported, the primary reason believers give is that it is an act of worship; giving is a believer’s response to God’s provision. Whether the church is “fine” with or without your support is irrelevant to the primary purpose of one’s giving.

**“I cannot afford to give”:** Over the course of life, most of us will experience seasons of abundance and seasons of lack. This is why, as a church, we do not teach concrete percentage rules for one’s giving and generosity. Excluding extreme circumstances like joblessness, giving and generosity can still always be part of our lives, even if the amount of giving changes (Mark 12:41-44).

As we’ve said, we do not approach tithing 10% of our income legalistically. Christians are not bound by the Old Testament command. However, the New Testament’s standard of sacrificial giving could not possibly require less of us.

For myself (Pastor Justin), there have been seasons of real financial struggle for my wife and I. Yet, we determined that no matter how bad things were for us, we would never allow our giving to dip below 10%, and in some seasons, we definitely felt that squeeze as it meant not eating out, maintaining tighter grocery trips, choosing a smaller, more affordable apartment, keeping our travel to a minimum, etc. Our decision to tithe 10% over living “more comfortably” was not out of legalistic obligation, but because we knew everything we have in life *is God’s*. And since generosity is God’s command, we know God will not command from us that which he will not provide. God gave us grace to trust he would always provide us *at least* the 10% to be able to give to our church—and God always did!

Those seasons of keeping our budget tight so we could be generous to our church required lifestyle changes that were part of what it meant to be sacrificial. And truthfully, it was through those seasons we saw tangible evidence of what Matthew 25 teaches: “that if we are faithful with the ‘little,’ God will entrust us with more.” God has been faithful to us as we chose to be faithful to him throughout the years. And as a result, we have been able to maintain our 10% minimum giving that helps grow our church while also giving to other missions and ministries we have felt led to support.

I do not write this as a way of *pressuring anyone* to trust God to do the same in their lives, but I do wonder, why not? Why not give generously trusting that God will honor those gifts, and if he so desires, entrust you with more? Why not consider how to make personal budget cuts to that which might be superfluous spending to ensure an additional measure of generosity in tithes and offerings? Though *not always* the case, I have found at times, “I cannot afford to give” might mean instead that one does not want to consider lifestyle changes that would make it possible to give generously to God.

**“I do not trust the church to use my money well”:** This is a valid concern. As Christians, we all have a responsibility to be wise stewards of what God has given to us by ensuring we invest those resources well. As a church, we go to great lengths to ensure our resources are used well and honor Christ (for more on our church structure, take *Intro to Redeemer East Harlem*).

With that said, here are a couple of important giving considerations:

- (1) Giving is not primarily about supporting the church. It is an act of worship. So, to not give, is withholding worship from God.
- (2) Being part of the church means you are part of supporting the Kingdom work being done in that church. Of course, we do not *require* people to give to be part of our church. We will never do so because we are called to love and care for all whom God draws to us. However, if one decides to be part of a church, partakes in the ministry of that church, and claims to be part of what God is doing in that church, why would one not feel led to support their church financially?
- (3) Ultimately, if one is not willing to support the work of the church because they do not believe in the mission of that church or they do not trust the church, then maybe it is time to find a church that they do trust and want to support. We do not desire for that to come off harsh, but rather **loving**. We want everyone to be a part of a church they believe in and therefore want to support in order that life-giving Kingdom work might be accomplished.