

STEWARDSHIP 101-6

TAUGHT BY BARRY MCWILLIAMS
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Giving to and Supporting His Ministry

Three Scriptural Models for giving Money away:

- **Tithes and Special Offerings OT (One tenth: the “first fruits”)**
Exo 28:28-31a; Numbers 18:21-32; Leviticus 27:30-31; Deut 14:22-29; Neh 13:10-12. God’s simple system of giving back to Him from what is already His was the Tithe; the first 10% from the increase of our labors - produce and flocks and herds. It was to be used to support the worship, provide for the Levites (who “tithed from the tithe” to support the priests) and every third year provide for the poor and needy. The wisdom literature of the Bible has much to say about the accumulation of wealth and our attitude towards it. The Tithe was abused by Israel – either neglected (Mal 3:10) or taken as a substitute for a righteous life (Amos 4:4) – the prophets frequently confronting the people. Later a minutiae of burdensome laws were attached to it leading to further abuse in NT times. A Temple Tax was later created to make up for the lacking. Nevertheless the Tithe is the only figure God has given as acceptable. Also significant regarding giving in the OT are the special offerings taken for the Tabernacle (Exo 25) and the Temple – David’s prayer in 1 Chronicles 29 is a key passage on giving – emphasizing it all belongs to God already. There are only four references to the Tithe in the NT.
- **A communal charing of goods and a simple lifestyle NT Synoptics/ Jesus and his disciples, earliest church, Epistle of James**
In the teaching of Jesus there was a radical call to a self-denying discipleship that lays up treasures in heaven, not on earth. Jesus’ parables frequently refer to the stewardship of money, wages, etc. Jesus made strong statements regarding the perils of “mammon” – such as his suggestion to the rich young ruler that he sell it all. He and his disciples lived simply from a common purse and the generosity of others, and he emphasized a concern for the poor and for sacrificial giving (the widows alm). In the early church in Jerusalem, there was a voluntary holding of goods in common. From this model of giving developed the ideals of monastic poverty often taken to extremes in Christian history.
- **Working and giving generously in response to God’s grace NT - Paul**
Every one of Paul’s epistles mention money, and there are numerous passages on giving: Romans 12:8, 13; Philippians 4:10-19; and most significantly 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 where he writes concerning an offering for the saints in Jerusalem. He emphasized giving as a response to God’s gift of salvation (8:9; (13-15). There is no mention of a percentage – rather it is to be given freely and generously (9:5-8) from a willing heart. Paul taught that giving was to be done regularly (1 Cor 16:1-3); according to or beyond our means and ability (8:3, 12); that none might be lacking (8:13f); not grudgingly or under compulsion, but cheerfully (9:7) as a measure of our faith. He emphasizes what God gives and also suggests that God will respond with blessing (9:8-11). There is also a strong emphasis on accountability in collection and administering gifts. Paul stresses a productive work ethic, working hard, that we might have more to give. So why doesn’t Paul mention the Tithe? It seems that he is concerned for a giving spirit that responds to God’s Gift in Christ accordingly – the tithe is just a “minimum” – the Christian ought to be giving far more, especially for the work of God in advancing the Gospel.

An excellent book on what the Bible teaches about wealth and possessions is **Neither Poverty nor Riches: A Biblical theology of possessions** by Craig L. Blomberg. (Review)
See also On the Pilgrim’s way: Christian Stewardship and the Tithe by John K. Brackett

Some Biblical Models of Supporting Ministry (all of which appear to be Scripturally valid)

- **Supported directly by those ministered or the ministry: “Paid Clergy”**
Matthew 10:9-15; Luke 10:3-9; 1 Corinthians 9:1-15; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:9; 1 Timothy 5:17-18 There is very clear teaching that laboring in the Gospel ministry is “worthy of its wages.” Even when Paul chose to seek his support otherwise, he acknowledged such would have been his “right” as an apostle.
- **Supported from outside the ministry: “Missionaries; Faith Supported Ministries”**
Philippians 1:5; 4:10-19; 1 Corinthians 16:6; 2 Corinthians 11:8-9; Romans 15:23-25; 16:1-2; 3 John 6-8. Paul seems to have been usually supported by his sending church (Antioch) and previous ministries (especially the Philippian’s church as he progressed on his missionary journeys. He deliberately chose not to take support from those ministered to as a way to not compromise his Gospel ministry. There were many traveling teachers about that were very much interested in gain, especially patronage from wealthy women. So it appears that when support is taken it should not compromise the integrity of the Gospel. In church history we find many examples of State Supported or denominational supported Ministries – and a history of struggles to keep the Gospel ministry out of political controls. Sending (“raised” supporters) are encouraged by the Scriptures (See especially 3 John 6-8)
- **Supported in full or in part by secular work: “Tentmakers” (Bi-vocational)**
Acts 18:3,5; 20:33-35; 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12 especially vs 9; 2 Thessalonians 3:7-13; 1 Corinthians 4:8-14 especially vs 12; 1 Corinthians 9:15. Paul sometimes chose to work with his own hands when necessary in his ministry. Rabbi’s were expected to have a trade. At times, Paul did it deliberately in order to set an example for others. However, working all day with leather and teaching late into the evenings at Corinthian was wearing – when support from outside arrived via Timothy, Paul was quick to put aside his “tents” and devote himself full time to his ministry.

Some “Plans” for increasing your Giving

- **Getting Started: Progressive Percentage Giving along with a plan for reducing Debt, Saving and living within your means** Tithing by its very nature makes for good financial practice and planning; budgeting and dealing with debt, watching spending carefully. Ideally: 10% Tithe should be set aside first; the 10%- 20% Savings (for the future, emergencies), 70%-80% “essentials – including taxes, etc.”.

Two good Christian Writers on how to deal with debt, budget, save, and give are (the late) Larry Burkett (<http://www.cfcministry.org/>) and Ron Blue (<http://www.ronblue.com/home.html>) who have many books on the subject: **Wealth to Last** by Larry Burkett and Ron Blue ; **The Family Financial Workbook: A Practical Guide to Budgeting** and **Debt Free Living** by Larry Burkett; **Master Your Money** and **Generous Living** by Ron Blue are among many other useful titles.

- **The Graduated Tithe** where, the more money one makes, the higher percentage one ought to give away. With time, as our “non-essential” income increases then we deliberately continue to live at the same level and proportionally increase our “tithing percentage” on the increasing income rather than increasing spending on our lifestyle, accumulating goods, etc. It also involves an application of the Christian “work ethic” to your life. For more on the concept of the Graduated Tithe see Todd Temples articles on Giving It Away.
- **Faith Promise Giving.** Giving God an opportunity to give through us, by looking to Him to provide beyond our known sources of income (2 Corinthians 8:3 *“For they gave according to their means, . . . and beyond their means, of their own free will”*) either through increased or unusual sources of income; by decreasing our expenses, or moving us to sacrifice. It is a faith exercise – a promise prayerfully made with God, that as He provides you will give, then trusting God to provide; and unlike a church pledge, a matter only between the Lord and the giver.

For more on *Faith Promise Giving* Howard Culbert’s Faith Promise Page: <http://home.snu.edu/~hculbert/fs/fp.htm> including his *Faith Promise FAQ* and J. Oswald Smith’s *Faith Promise Bulletin Insert*. Faith Promise Giving programs are used by many denominations and churches including Presbyterians, Christian Reformed, Methodists, Nazarenes, etc as well as many missions programs and other Christian Works. Many can testify as to how God has provided in unexpected ways.