



“Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which he hath given thee” (Deuteronomy 16:17).

Giving in Worship

Central Truth: Giving is an act of worship.

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Topic: Giving: To God; Worship.

Each church has its own “personality” which reflects the people who compose it and the style of worship they follow. I became pastor of a church whose order of service was singing, offering, sermon. I preferred for some special message in music to come just before the sermon and changed the order of the service. A brother came to me and said, “Pastor, I respect your preferences on this matter and do not intend to complain, but I liked our former order of service better. Nothing prepares me to hear a word from God as does giving my offering to Him.” That brother had learned the art of giving as an act of worship. His offering was presented in the spirit, “Lord, I am giving to You as an indication that I am willing to receive from You. Speak, for your servant listens.” This study aims to create in you a spirit of joyful worship in giving your offerings to the Lord.

A first major step is learning that we give to the Lord. We do not give to the church to pay its bills or to the preacher to support his ministry. We give to the Lord through His church.

Giving is worship. It is declaring God's worth-ship to receive (and require!) our gifts. Giving is as appropriate in worship as singing, praying, or preaching. This study challenges you to make your giving an expression of your worship of God.

I. GIVING IS REQUIRED (Deuteronomy 16:10, 17)

God leaves us no option. He requires *“a tribute of a freewill-offering of*

thine hand, which thou shalt give unto the LORD thy God, according as the LORD thy God hath blessed thee They shall not appear before the LORD empty: every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessings of the LORD thy God which he hath given thee.” We must present an offering when we come to worship before our God.

Why? Not because God needs the money. On the contrary, He already owns all the silver and the gold, as well as the cattle on all the hills. If He were in need (which He never is) He would not look to us for His supply.

We give because we need it, not because God needs it. If a man works for fifteen dollars an hour, he trades one hour of his life for every fifteen dollars he receives in salary. When one gives a portion of his money to the Lord, he is giving that portion of his life.

Giving is an act by which we testify that God is God. He owns all things. What we have is truly His. We return our offerings to Him to testify that we are but stewards of His resources. Therefore, giving is an act of worship.

Our only option is to give liberally and consistently to God or to be disobedient to Him. The proper spirit in our giving was expressed long ago by King David as he presented a lavish gift to God and said, *“Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name. But who am I and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee”* (I Chronicles 29:13, 14). That is the spirit of worship in giving.

What is your spirit? Do you give because you must or because you may? Do you give with hesitation and regret or with liberality and joy? Do you set aside the Lord's portion first, or do you give out of what is left over after you have met personal needs? Do you pay for vacations and other luxuries out of personal funds or the Lord's offerings? The answer to those questions will indicate whether you worship in your giving.

Remember what God requires: *“They shall not appear before the LORD empty”* (Deuteronomy 16:16).

II. GIVING IS REGULAR

The ancient Jew was required to appear before the Lord in His sanctuary three times each year: the feast of unleavened bread, the feast of weeks, and the feast of tabernacles. Each time he came to worship, he had to bring an offering in his hands to present to the Lord. He never worshiped God without an offering.

That principle still applies. Instructions concerning a special benevolent

offering to help the saints in a drought-stricken area included this statement: *"Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him"* (I Corinthians 16:2). They gathered to worship on the first day of the week, so they brought their offerings on the first day of the week.

Our offerings to the Lord must never be based on "as you feel like it." That indicates that God is less important than the payment of our utility bills or the mortgage payment on our houses. Those are never based on your preference. God is worthy of first place. His claim on our finances is first. *"Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase"* is the directive of Proverbs 3:9.

There is a custom in some parts of the Orient which illustrates this principle. A guest always takes a little gift to his host when invited for a meal or a visit in the private home. So when we go to God's house, we must take His gift.

Does that mean a destitute person cannot worship God? Not at all. *"If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not"* (II Corinthians 8:12). But even a person with absolutely no money can offer *"the sacrifice of praise"* (Hebrews 13:15).

III. GIVING IS TO THE LORD

Here is the principle: *"Thou shalt give unto the LORD thy God"* (Deuteronomy 10:9). Only when our thoughts are upon the Lord is our giving a true act of worship.

The ancient Hebrews were very conscious of the Lord as they worshiped. They had to go from their homes to the central sanctuary (a very long trip for many of them) just to appear before the Lord. Deuteronomy 12 shows that they were to come before the Lord, offer their sacrifices before the Lord, make their offerings to the Lord, rejoice before the Lord, and eat before the Lord; every act was to be done in the conscious presence of the Lord their God. A consciousness of the Lord was what made their worship move from dead ritual to vibrant participation with God.

Christians must meet on the Lord's Day with the same spirit. Their offerings must be presented to the Lord himself. We do not give to the church to pay bills or support missions. We do not give to the pastor to pay his salary. We give to the Lord, or we lose the spirit of worship.

A lad attended a church where the ushers received the offering and took the plates into a small room to the side of the pulpit. He heard teaching that

offerings were given to the Lord. He saw the ushers go into that room with the offering and come out without it. In his childish mind he pictured God letting a bucket down through the ceiling, the ushers putting the money in it, and God drawing it back up into heaven. Wouldn't it be wonderful if more mature people considered God to be that personally involved in receiving their offerings? He is!

IV. GIVING IS PROPORTIONATE

The principle of giving is expressed in the lesson text as “*as the LORD thy God hath blessed thee*” (Deuteronomy 16:10). (See verse 17.) Giving is to be in proportion to receiving.

But what portion of what we receive should be given back to God? The only amount mentioned in the Bible, and it is mentioned some three dozen times, is the tithe. Tithe means one tenth, 10 percent. The word comes from a Babylonian word which means “one finger,” meaning one finger in ten or 10 percent.

“*All the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD'S: it is holy unto the LORD*” (Leviticus 27:30). So 10 percent of all that grows from the ground belongs to the Lord and is holy because it is His. Leviticus 27:32 continues, “*Concerning the tithe of the herd, or of the flock, . . .the tenth shall be holy unto the LORD.*” So 10 percent of all the livestock belongs to the Lord and is holy. Anything that is holy to the Lord must be reserved for His use only. Nowhere in Holy Scriptures is that percentage changed, increased, or decreased. It is still the principle by which God's people should give.

But the tithe is not all. God receives freewill offerings from the hands of His people. Benevolent offerings (as in I Corinthians 16) are freewill offerings above all other gifts we present to God. Those were called “thank offerings” because they were the means through which the ancient Hebrews expressed their love and thanks to God for His provisions.

The only way you can increase your tithe is to increase your net income. But you can grow in the grace of giving by increasing the amount of your freewill offerings. If you want a blessed surprise, try to out give God. You do not suffer lack because you give to Him. Jesus said, “*Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together. . . . For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again*” (Luke 6:38). God invites you to bring your tithes and freewill offerings to Him and “*prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that*

there shall not be room enough to receive it” (Malachi 3:10).

V. GIVING IS A JOY

God relates joy to giving. In the midst of the section giving directions about the worship of God through offerings, there is found this statement: *“Thou shalt rejoice before the LORD thy God” (Deuteronomy 16:11).* One is reminded of the great joy of David and his peers as they presented their offerings to the Lord. *“The people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly, because with perfect heart they offered willingly to the LORD: and David the king also rejoiced with great joy” (I Chronicles 29:9).*

How can we rejoice in our giving? Only liberal gifts to God create joy. A grudging, selfish, or fearful spirit always kills the joy of giving. There can be no worship in giving unless there is a joy in it.

Someone advised, “Give until it hurts.” Another more wisely counseled, “Give until it feels good.” The New Testament reads, *“Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver” (II Corinthians 9:7).*

A large gift is not determined by how much you give but by how much you have left over: one hundred dollars for one person may be larger than one thousand dollars for another. How large are your gifts?

“God, deliver us from the covetous and selfish spirit which withholds our gifts from You. Teach us how to worship in our offerings as we give unto the Lord. Create in us a spirit of joyful worship in presenting to You our tithes and freewill offerings. Enable us to grow in the grace of giving. For Jesus' sake. Amen.”

Questions

- 1 Why does God teach us to give offerings to Him?
2. In what way is giving an act of worship of God?
3. Why should we give each time we assemble to worship?
4. What portion of our income should we give to the Lord?
5. Why should our offerings to God be given through our church?
6. What is the difference between tithes and offerings?
7. How can our giving become a joy for us?
8. How can you worship in giving if you have no money?
9. How can we become more conscious of God as we give?
10. How has this study profited you personally?

