

A Disciple's Handbook

DISCIPLESHIP CHAPTER 9

New Testament Scriptural Giving

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I can't tell you how many church meetings I have attended that were focused on "stewardship," and support of the ministry presented by a denomination or an evangelistic association that was bringing a message to enhance living the Christian life. I have seen every sort of manipulation and strategy to intimidate or obligate the giver into giving more. I have seen "seed faith" in action and the prophetic promise of the 100 fold return if a certain amount was given to "the man of God" or the prophet. What does the Bible say about the obligation of giving? What about the giving of the tithe which nearly every church seems to require as a scriptural principle?

Many a media ministry has become a multi million dollar organization and will utilize any and all marketing schemes at their disposal to enhance their bottom line. Money preachers drive fancy cars, fly private jets and live in luxurious homes. They have gotten rich by selling their wares and claiming scriptural authority for doing so.

If you want to experience religious anger, dissonance, or heated debate, this is the topic to broach. Giving is the bread and butter of ministry. It is support for a man and his message. It provides the financing of the Gospel to world. It provides support for both the local church and missionary outreaches. Men and women go forth after devoting a large part of their lives training for "ministry" and look forward to the expectation that they will "live by the Gospel". *The Lord hath ordained that those preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel.*" (1Corinthians 9:14)

Professional Ministry

The concept of the clergy, professional ministry is a well establish and unquestioned paradigm. ([See the power of paradigms.](#)) The concept of **Ministry** has been traditionally

connected to career or occupation. The focal point of ministry is superintending the building that a congregation attends. The concept of clergy as a professional career extends into the dim past of "the church." The traditional church denomination operates in accord with **the professional clergy concept**. Institutionally accredited, "professional ministers" are required to serve a parish. So financial sustenance is obviously expected or *required*.

The obligation of giving and the expectation that church members should contribute tithes and offerings is a fact of church-life. However, if the truth be known, what the Bible says about giving, should reveal other criteria regarding support for the work of God. I believe each of us has to examine "giving for the gospel's sake" in light of Scripture and draw our best personal conclusions in the light of the Word.

It requires dedication and commitment to a local church body to share in meeting its financial demands. It is easy to see how giving can become burdensome or the leadership turn to preach on the requirements or obligations of giving. Almost every church I have seen teaches an obligation of paying at least a tithe and for amounts over your tithe, to give "offerings." Tithing obligations are promoted widely as commanded Scripturally using Malachi 3: 8-12. Jesus addressed the matter of required giving when confronting the pharisees. He made a distinction between giving out of the leading of the heart as opposed to the demands of the law. According to what Jesus taught his disciples in this *church*-age we are not under compunction or legal obligations to give but to give freely according the purposes of the heart.

Every believing Christian should be willing to support the **Kingdom of God** as we judge it to be **best presented**. We need to see the life of God as a Divine promise and a transforming human potentiality. We need to see ministers bringing others into this higher life. Once that criterion is met, we can go on to other matters concerning Giving. It is not my desire to subvert a system that you are committed to for your own best reasons, but rather *to encourage each person to strive to know God as fully as possible* and to experience the potential written of in the Gospel, even if it means setting aside certain long- held traditions. Every person should support the Kingdom of God as we see it best expressed. We need to see the life of God as a potentiality and the people who minister bringing others into it. Once that criterion is met, we can go on to other matters concerning Giving.

Giving: Giving & Sharing is Blessed by God

There are no laws (rules) for giving in the Kingdom of God. God has set us free from rules and obligations including rules about giving. **Giving is good!** Giving expresses the goodness and openness of the heart of God. Giving supports the man of God but giving can also **support other people** who are not necessarily "ministers" of churches but who God wishes to bless through us. Jesus said, "*Give to the poor and you will have treasures in heaven.*" (Matthew 19:21) Various kinds of worldly commitments touch upon the Kingdom of God that need support which may include buildings, outreach expenses, travel, or any of a wide variety of needs which can only be met by others sharing the cost. God wants his will to be done through selfless sharing and contributions of money resources. Ideally, the believer will discern his part in meeting the needs of others. We need to be able to hear God leading us in ***the ministry of giving*** so that it is truly a work of God for the Gospel sake and not just a worthy cause or charity. Giving as "unto the Lord" will always have a reward in the age to come. The Almighty knows if we have a worldly reward or a heavenly one. Having a reward in this world comes from drawing attention to ourselves in ostentatious displays of generosity that *draw attention to our goodness.* *"*Giving to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven,*" suggests that giving to the poor is following God's intentions in the gospel by giving to the less fortunate and needy.

Some basic Bible principles shed light on the subject of giving.

It is more blessed to Give than to receive

Give and it shall be given unto you

Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven

Those who give to the poor lend to God

The Tithe is the Lord's - (Old covenant principle)

In the measure you give it shall be given to you

Sow sparingly, reap sparingly

Give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven

Give as you purpose in your heart,

Let no one give out of obligation

God loves a cheerful giver

The above scriptures are a few of many references to money and giving found in the Bible. With so many ministries eager to receive our contributions it is a challenge to be able to discern who God would have us support among the ministries or servants of God. But I believe we would miss God if we *only gave to ministry professionals* and not to individuals and especially the poor. God's love is about giving. Ministry is about caring

and sharing. Koinonia is also about mutual sharing and support. This whole world thrives in the light of a generous heart.

"God so loved the world that he gave -" "God so loved the world that he gave -"

Christians who have a reborn, redeemed nature do not resist giving and sharing. The unredeemed are not inclined and generally do not want to let go of anything. The world tends to think that their well being and survival are threatened by releasing any necessary resources. Believers know that when they give they are really investing in the lives of others and God is aware of that gift and accounts for it in due time. Those returns are certain to come back to them, either now or later.

There are unscrupulous ministers who have learned how to grow rich and live sumptuously by manipulating the audience / congregation. They have discovered how to make claims that their ministry is what God is using (prophetically) to give financial "breakthroughs." The doctrine of *Seed Faith* has been used by dozens of Prosperity-focused ministries. They use worldly strategies, not heavenly ones. Such men or women will also receive their due reward if not in this world, the world to come.

The Tithe

The doctrine of the tithe (a tenth of one's increase) is taught in churches often not just as a principle but as an obligation (law). Some though I think few congregations actually enforce the giving of tithes by recording all receipts and keeping scrupulous records of the income although some come very close to this. Mostly what we hear is teaching which explains that tithing is a practice previous to the Christian era. We find Abraham tithing before the era of law in the Book of Genesis. Thus with Abraham giving a tenth to Melchisedek we might infer in typology, that Christians should follow in like principle.

The Storehouse

The Book of Malachi is usually quoted by those who teach the *obligation* of giving to **the local church house**. It argues that the storehouse is the place where you are fed (spiritual speaking.) This passage reminds us of God's displeasure at those who withhold the tithe. God calls it robbing Him. "*The Tithe is mine,*" says the Lord, therefore to withhold it is to rob him. In the time of the Levites who ministered in the temple the tithe provided for their food and care. It was there only source of income. They ate of the sacrifices.

Malachi describes the "storehouse" as the place we are supposed to bring our tithe to God. Pastors love to teach that the storehouse is the local church, where all of the sheep

are fed. Remember that under the law the Levites only lived through the use of tithing. They were those appointed to minister as God's ordained priesthood were sustained by the rest of the tribes of Israel. After Jesus *ascended into the heavenly temple of God*, it is my belief that the nature of the storehouse has changed as radically as the priesthood. At this time in *the dispensation* of the church age, the people of God are supported and fed by natural bread nor by the lambs and oxen of sacrifices once given up to the Levites. Now we are a different priesthood before God; we give spiritual sacrifices unto Christ who is now King and High Priest over all. (*Read Hebrews which explains the transition from the old covenant to the new.*)

For us in the church age, the local church model being the storehouse has some problems associated with it:

Are you fed there?

Can God be experienced there?

Is his presence manifested?

Is God's Word, the counsel of God in scripture being taught?

Is the Spiritual life demonstrated as a reality and made accessible to others?

Are the needs of the poor and needy being met?

Are other important voices for the Kingdom of God recognized and supported?

As those who also edify us individually through gifts of the Holy Spirit?

Expectations of a vibrant, Spiritual congregation:

Is God honored, exalted and given first place? Is He the focus of praise? Is there an honor afforded to the God of power and Might? Does He inspire Holy Fear? Jesus our Great High Priest who keeps accounts of everything given in his name, whether money in a church collection plate, food to a hungry child, a visit to an invalid, a drink to a thirsty man, or a visit to a person sick and alone in a hospital. (Matthew 25)

God sees every act done and sees the motive of every heart from which that gift is bestowed. God loves a cheerful giver. The motive of the heart touches faith. We know that Jesus sees our love and kindness expressed to someone in need. Giving as one giving to God that is a faithful act.

We know confidently, that he will also meet any of our needs in a time of lack because we did not withhold giving to others. We do not give out of obligation. We are not debtors to the law. We are free to give because God is a giver. Giving is sowing seeds. The seeds are recorded in a heavenly journal. If we sow bounteously we are told to expect to reap bounteously. We expect something will result from our planting. The sower of seeds also look forward to a crop which will come at *a future harvest time*.

Sowing and reaping is surely a part of giving to the Kingdom of God. The commodity may be money but it can be any other commodity of kindness or care. God will meet our needs at a future time because we have planted. God stores up treasure for another day in a heavenly place, because we have given.

Tithing As Worship

The giving of tithes under the law was not just a simple token gift placed in an offering plate or bag. Tithing in the scriptural sense relates to *an act of worship in presenting the "tithe" to God.*

We find the act described in Deuteronomy Chapter 26. "Therefore it shall be, when the LORD thy God hath given thee rest from all thine enemies round about, in the land which the LORD thy God gives thee for an inheritance to possess it, that thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou shalt not forget it." *"And it shall be, when thou art come in unto the land which the LORD thy God gives thee for an inheritance, and possesses it, and dwells therein;" (- 26:1-)* *"That thou shalt take of the first of all the fruit of the earth, which thou shalt bring of thy land that the LORD thy God gives thee, and shalt put it in a basket, and shalt go unto the place which the LORD thy God shall choose to place his name there."* (- Deuteronomy 26:2-15) **Note** this is during the dispensation of *The LEVITICAL PRIESTHOOD.*

Abraham gave a tithe to Melchisedek the King Of Salem two thousand years before the Church age and prior to the Age of the Law. This tithe prefigures the law of commandments, giving, as it were, to the King of Heaven who exists outside of genealogy forever. We give as unto him. Jesus abides forever, as the high priest Melchisedek.

Now regarding tithing as worship, I am not asking that you should memorize a ritual to recite as a rite. But it is good to have a sense of the understanding noted in the Leviticus 26 text. The giving of such a gift or tithe should be something which touches our own understanding of our previous "captivity" and God's hand at work to take us out of that place of bondage and oppression, want and sorrow. The spiritual life acknowledges that we were also taken out of bondage. It is a faithful saying which needs to be spoken. Notice that all of this tithing worship is spoken to God in the place which has His name written upon it. Today we are redeemed and the house of God is not a special place it is the human house where the spirit resides. The tithing worship reminds us of God's covenant with us and how he is taking further towards strength, blessing and victorious

living. Speaking these things tells God that we know what he has done for us and that we are truly thankful that he knows and remembers us each and that he will continue to be with us supplying good things.

The Prosperity Message

The past decades have seen a great emphasis on the Prosperity message. Poverty and lack are clearly seen as a curse throughout scripture. God does want us to live without provision. The redemption from the curse of the law also freed us want and lack. We believe that "*My God shall supply all of our needs according to his riches in Glory by Christ Jesus.*" In gauging any matter of doctrine we have to hold it up not only to common sense and scripture but to discerning what the spiritual life needs to be. ("*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.*") Though we should not lack nor want, God wants more of us and not less of us. Therefore anything which takes our focus away from God and places it upon unfruitful things, those worldly things which only decay, is really a stumbling block for a believer. Those who preach riches and wealth are leading people away from intimacy unless they are able to handle wealth and prosperity more graciously than I. Many are able to assume possessions of wealth and money and property without being seduced away from God's presence. But sometimes the aware of the futility and the emptiness of wealth comes too late when are already victimized by excesses, this was the case of the writer of Ecclesiastes, Solomon who realized late in life that with wealth comes other griefs and spareness of the soul. Gain is not Godliness, the apostle writes in 1 Timothy 6:5, withdraw yourselves from such doctrines. *but Godliness with contentment is great gain,* (1 Timothy 6:6) God wishes to supply our needs, to bless us in our going out and our coming in to make us fruitful in body and in all of the pursuits of our life. (Deuteronomy 28:3-6)

The doctrine of *prosperity does associate with blessing* (Deuteronomy 28) but the negative side of riches is its link to selfish motives both in the giver and the receiver. Many who preach the prosperity message are in a position to directly benefit by the unrestrained giving that is encouraged in sermons and in seminars. Some of those who preach the doctrine exceed the Word of God by suggesting that gifts given to their own ministries have the greatest return connected to them. Of course the hyper faith doctrine ascribes a greater degree of return, thirty, sixty or one hundred fold spoken of in scripture insured as a consequence of giving. There is greater insight in the 30, 60 and hundred fold metaphor than mere cash and assets. The prospering of the soul is accounted above all, in Spiritual richness. Giving, according to Jesus, should not be in the manner of the Pharisees who "sound a trumpet" to give notice that they are doing an

alms deed. Jesus teaches to give in secret and for the left hand not to see what the right hand does. All of these teachings address anonymous giving rather than a public display in which people are applauding the giver for his excellent generosity. The Lord says of such people, “-they receive their reward.” by the act of receiving public acclaim and applause. It is far better to give with only the Father who sees in secret knowing our deed. He will be the one who insures a return in the best possible time. Any man or woman can give or contribute in any kind of thing or commodity. One can give a gift of service another a gift of a song. Another a gift of kindness. The same principle applies when the motive is right, God who is the author and overseer of every good and perfect gift. The Father knows when our giving is free from self exaltation. He will insure the return.

[A description of Thanksgiving, Praise and Worship,](#)

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