

Stewardship

Inspiring a deeper understanding of true giving



Excel in the Grace of Giving!

Bible Studies

Excel in the Grace of Giving

Bible Study 1

Why Christians Give

Prayer: Good and gracious heavenly Father, thank you for your great generosity toward us. Each and every day, we awaken to your wonderful love, mercy, and grace. We especially thank you for your most indescribable gift, the gift of your Son, Jesus, who, *“though he was rich, yet for [our] sakes became poor, so that [we] through his poverty might become rich”* (2 Corinthians 8:9). We ask for your blessings on this study as we discuss *“Why Christians Give.”* Help us to *“Excel in the Grace of Giving.”* In your precious name we pray. **Amen.**

Because God is a Giving God

By nature, God is a loving and a giving God. God’s character is to give. Our heavenly Father loves us so much that he holds nothing back from us. *“He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?”* (Romans 8:32). To give and to keep on giving is the essential nature of God, who is love.

God’s love was first given to us at creation, and it continues today. *“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights. . .”* (James 1:17). All that we are, have, and hope to be are gifts from God. Our God is a loving God. The very center of the Gospel is God’s love for us. *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life”* (John 3:16). We are the Lord’s through creation and redemption. God has given us life today and the promise of future life with him in heaven.



God is the provider and, therefore, the owner of all things. Acknowledging God’s ownership is the basic principle for Christian giving. David said, *“The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it”* (Psalm 24:1). When we give our gifts to God as grateful and faithful stewards, we are returning to him what he has already given to us. Paul asks in 1 Corinthians 4:7, *“What do you have that you did not receive?”* Think about the myth of the “self-made” man who has “pulled himself up by his bootstraps.” He thinks, “Everything is mine.” How did he acquire his gifts and talents, his health and ingenuity? Who provided the resources and opportunities for his success? In Deuteronomy 8:18, we read, *“But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth. . .”* As God’s stewards, we acknowledge that all of our blessings come from the hand of God. If we fail to acknowledge

Trusting that God will provide for our needs makes it possible for us to tithe.

Is tithing relevant under grace?

In contrast to the Old Testament where tithing is often referenced, tithing is rarely mentioned in the New Testament. In Matthew 23:23, Jesus, while not negating the importance of the tithe, stressed that the inner motive is what matters, not the outward act. *“Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of your mint, rue and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God. You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone.”* Jesus condemns the Pharisees and their laws, because their hearts are not right. Jesus affirms their practice of tithing but criticizes the hard attitude of their hearts.

While tithing is a God-pleasing practice, if it is not accompanied by a God-pleasing motive, it ceases to be an offering that honors God. On the other hand, if we don't honor God with our firstfruits and proportionate giving, is God in control? Does our giving reflect our trust that he will provide? Is our giving reflecting the sincerity and earnestness of our faith (2 Corinthians 8:8)? God will continue to love us even if we don't tithe. However, Scripture is clear about our need to give generously, cheerfully, and not out of compulsion (2 Corinthians 9:7). God wants us to experience the joy of giving and give as a meaningful part of our worship of Christ.

5. How did the disciples in Acts 11:27-30 react to the needs of their brothers in Judea?
6. According to Deuteronomy 16:16-17, how were the Israelites to appear before the Lord and what were they to bring?
7. What are some major differences between giving to a church budget and giving to the Lord?
8. In what ways has God blessed you? How are you sharing those blessings with others?
9. Is tithing relevant today?



Cheerful Giving

God wants us to give cheerfully. 2 Corinthians 9:7 reads, *“Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”* As we grow as disciples, as we understand more and more what God has done for us in Christ, as we see that Jesus gave himself, we are prompted by the Holy Spirit to respond cheerfully by sharing the resources that God has given us. When God's people give faithfully from willing and loving hearts, God is pleased, and we “Excel in the Grace of Giving.”

Regular Giving

In the Old Testament, God's people gave as they harvested their crops and as new livestock were born. They gave the first part of their crops and livestock trusting that God would bless them with a good harvest and/or more animals. Today, most of us receive income weekly, biweekly, or monthly. God wants us to give regularly of the money that we receive. Paul wrote: *“On the first day of each week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income . . .”* (1 Corinthians 16:2). God wants us to give on a regular basis. The tithe