



Holy Trinity Claygate

Following Jesus Together

A Short Guide to Biblical Teaching on Giving

*"Everything comes from You,
and we have given You
only what comes from Your hand"*

1 Chronicles 29:14

Introduction

This guide has been produced to help church members as they reflect on all aspects of their giving, year by year. It outlines a biblical framework for giving and then gives some questions to consider as well as some practical guidelines.

The Giving God

When we consider our own giving to Holy Trinity, to mission, to special appeals, to charities, to friends in need - how do we decide what to give? One of the problems with an affluent and materialistic society is that there is pressure on us to spend before we acknowledge the giving God who has revealed himself in Jesus Christ.

Before you read on you may find it helpful to read and reflect on 2 Corinthians 8 and 9. In these chapters Paul shows how our regular giving is rooted in the gospel in three central themes: the grace of God, the cross of Christ, and the unity of the Spirit.

- firstly, God in His providence creates and sustains us, meeting our material needs through both the created order, and the care of others for us. (8:1)
- secondly, God as the crucified and risen Saviour transforms the desires of the heart of all who turn to Him in faith and trust. (8:9; 9:15)
- thirdly, God the Holy Spirit empowers us to respond in practical ways by using all that He has given to us. (9:1-2)

The Giving Christian

Our response to the giving God is to give ourselves. That was the response of the early Christians about whom Paul was writing, and it has been the response of Christians down the ages.

But the verses in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 raise a number of specific areas for personal reflection. In 2 Corinthians 8:3 we read that "*they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability*". We might ask ourselves:

- if we believe that through the world in which we live, God both meets our needs and gives us all things to enjoy, how do we use our money to show our gratitude to God?
- in the self-giving of Jesus Christ we experience the extraordinary grace of God to re-mould our innermost being and release our potential. Therefore we might ask ourselves: how willing are we to be truly generous in practice?
- Jesus and His disciples were dependent on the hospitality and generosity of others when they were engaged in ministry.
- Christians have to ask - how do we resource "the household of God" (*Ephesians 2:19*) today, its mission, essential maintenance, and full-time workers?

A Christian's stewardship of money will be concerned with the growth of the Kingdom of God and the proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ. In this task the responsibility of the local church is crucial.

Practical Guidelines

It can be helpful to bear in mind some practical guidelines when considering Christian giving:

- Christian giving will be regular and proportionate to our regular income (1 Corinthians 16:21-3). Paul commends systematic giving and talks of setting aside money 'on the first day of the week'.
- many Christians adopt the Old Testament principle of a tithe as a benchmark for their own giving (see, for example, Malachi 3:10).
- This means setting aside 10% of household income for the Lord's work. This is not a rule, but many find it a helpful guideline.
- giving of the first fruits (Proverbs 3:9) challenges our priorities on how we use non-regular income, such as bonuses and inheritances.
- as with any household, the running costs of a church and its buildings, and the support of a Christian minister or worker, call for contributions from all of us who are members. This is part of the idea behind the annual giving review at Holy Trinity.

A Spiritual Postscript

As Paul wrote: "But just as you excel in everything – in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us – see that you also excel in this grace of giving" (2 Corinthians 8:7)

All Christians are called to share the gospel with others, some as evangelists and others to exercise pastoral care. But all Christians are called to be generous and those entrusted with significant financial resources have a special responsibility to be good stewards. For the way we use our money is a significant sign of our concern for the coming of His kingdom, and the expression of His mercy, justice and love.

Our giving is a measure of how much God's love for us in Christ is mirrored in our love for Him (Mark 10:21). When we give to the Church, we acknowledge its centrality in God's purpose and His desire for its maturity. As we give, may we reflect on the cross, and all that was achieved for us through the death of Christ. How insignificant are our earthly riches in comparison!

"Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver"

(2 Corinthians 9:7)

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