

Giving to the LORD

301-4

One of the biggest turnoffs to organized religion is that unchurched people have this erroneous idea that most churches just want their money.

I hope and pray that is never the case at Living Faith Fellowship.

I praise the LORD for the way our people give to the work of the LORD, so much so that we rarely bring up the conversation about giving.

I heard a story about a pastor who started the Sunday service with the statement, "This church, like a crippled man, has got to get up and walk." The congregation replied, "That's right, preacher. Let it walk. Let it walk."

He continued, "This church, like Elijah on Mount Carmel, has got to run." And his congregation said, "Then let it run, preacher. Let it run."

He said, "This church has got to mount up on wings like eagles and fly." And his congregation said, "Then let it fly. Let it fly, preacher. Let it fly." And then this pastor paused for a moment and said, "But if it flies, it's going to take money."

And the congregation said, "Then let it walk. Let it walk." Some people have a strong aversion to even the mention of money at church.

The New Testament teaches that the amount of our giving is a **personal** decision, based upon conviction and a drawing that comes from the Holy Spirit.

2 Corinthians 9:7 So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. NKJV

How should someone give? As he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly.

We should not give to the LORD's work and then afterwards regret the fact that we gave.

The person Paul describes in this passage is a cheerful giver.

The word cheerful in the Greek language is *haleros*, from which we get our English word hilarious, which means boisterously happy, noisy, and exuberant.

Let's read about an account where a husband and wife wanted to appear to be hilarious givers while actually lying to the LORD.

Read ***Acts 4:36-5:4***

Barnabas, the son of Encouragement, had given the proceeds of his belongings to the needs of the Church and its members, as some of the other believers had also done.

Acts 4:32, neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.

These gifts were not **obligations**; rather, they were given as a response of love to all that the LORD had saved them from.

I don't know how much land these followers sold, but I can imagine it was worth a lot of money, so the people were excited to see that huge offering.

This husband-and-wife team wanted to fit in and receive the notoriety that came from Barnabas' extravagant giving. This married couple was trying to imitate Barnabas because they witnessed the amount of attention Barnabas' giving caused.

George MacDonald once said, "*Half of the misery in the world is caused by people trying to look, rather than trying to be.*"

Certain behaviors from Christians can cause a bad reputation within the world or among younger believers.

We are also told by Jesus in *Matthew 7:20, Therefore by their fruits you will know them. NKJV*

Ananias and Sapphira sold a piece of land and gave part of the proceeds to the Apostles. The issue was not that they kept some of the money; the issue was hypocrisy and lying to the Spirit! They were not forced to sell off their property, nor did they have to give the entire amount of money to the Church.

Jesus taught in *Matthew 6:1, "Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise, you have no reward from your Father in heaven.*

Matthew 6:2 Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.

Matthew 6:3 But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, NKJV

Matthew 6:4 that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.”

When you offer your time, talents, or treasure to the Lord, *why do you want the thanks to come from men?*

Again, *Matthew 6:1: Otherwise, you have no reward from your Father in heaven.*

Everybody enjoys an accolade at times, but instead of sounding your trumpet, you should let the LORD promote you!

Proverbs 16:3 Commit your works to the LORD, and your thoughts will be established. NKJV

The sin of Ananias and Sapphira was that they lied about this transaction to the Holy Spirit, and they were not being authentic.

As a side note, these verses prove the Triune **nature of God.**

Acts 5:3 "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit...Acts 5:4 You have not lied to men but to God."

Most of us understand that we are not under the Law but Grace, so our giving is to be an offering of worship unto the LORD.

The Christians from earlier in this narrative gave all they had as a response to the LORD, not because it was a law.

Randy Alcorn is a noted author on Christian stewardship who emphasizes giving as an act of faith. In his book, *The Treasure Principle*, Randy Alcorn offers some biblical facts regarding

God's perspective on giving and how it ties into our relationship to Him. Randy Alcorn said that there are over 2,350 verses in Scripture about money. *Why did Jesus talk about money so often?*

Jesus often spoke on giving because there is a fundamental **connection** between people's spiritual lives and their actions and attitudes concerning money and possessions.

1. You can also tell what a person is passionate about by what they consistently **talk** about. People always talk about what's on their minds.
2. You can also tell what a person is passionate about by what **priorities** they set with their money and possessions.

Matthew 6:21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. NKJV

But Ananias and Sapphira's real sin was hypocrisy.

Basically, hypocrisy is when a person claims to believe something but acts in a different manner than they claim.

Webster's says, "*The word hypocrite ultimately came into English from the Greek word hypokrites, which means 'an actor' or 'a stage player.'*"

Jesus calls hypocrisy a sin in the New Testament, and there are verses in the Old Testament that call hypocrisy a sin as well.

Isaiah 29:13 Therefore, the Lord said: "Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths and honor Me with their

lips, but have removed their hearts far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men, NKJV

It is not what we say, but how we live, that tells the truth about what we really believe. The LORD wants first place in our hearts. Lying to the LORD is futile. The LORD wants us to be authentic to Him. He knows our hearts and our thoughts anyway. *Why are we inauthentic?*

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Hebrews 4:13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account. NKJV

Most Protestant and Evangelical churches teach what is called **tithing**. The word tithe means 10%. That's the essence of the word, 10%.

Tithing is not mentioned in the New Testament Church or the pastoral epistles. The only time tithing is mentioned in the New Testament is in reference to Jewish people in an Old Testament context.

Tithing in the Old Testament was a form of ancient taxation. Israel had a unique form of government that was unlike any other form of government that has existed. Ancient Israel was a theocracy, which is a system of government where God Himself ruled.

The LORD Himself governed the people and the nation through different judges and kings, at different times.

To support this ancient theocratic government, God required from the Jewish people three basic tithes. One was the Temple Tithe, mentioned in *Leviticus 27* and *Numbers 18*.

The word tithe was a Hebrew **mathematical** term that means one-tenth. A tithe is 10% of something, and in the context of the Old Testament, not necessarily money.

The **Temple** Tithe sometimes consisted of produce, such as vegetables, fruits, grains, and edible animals.

The Temple Tithe was an ancient form of Jewish taxation.

When the Israelites were commanded to pay a tenth of what they possessed to the Levites, they were paying the expenses of operating a nation.

There was also a **Festival** Tithe given either in the form of an animal, produce, goods, or it could be converted into money and given.

The Festival Tithe was also an annual tithe, and it was to be used for the financing of the Hebrew National Feast and festivals, and it was also a form of ancient taxation.

There was a **Benevolence** Tithe to support the poor. This tithe gave financial assistance to those who were unable to support themselves, like a national welfare program.

Altogether, it is estimated that the required tithes and offerings amounted to just over 30% of someone's annual income.

For an Israelite not to give these three tithes or offerings constituted an actual civil crime against the **theocratic** government (governed by God and not man).

A very misused and misunderstood passage in the Old Testament, the prophet Malachi said,

Malachi 3:8 "Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' in tithes and offerings.

Malachi 3:9 You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me, even this whole nation.

Malachi 3:10 Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this," Says the LORD of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it." NKJV

Tithes and offerings under the Mosaic Law were mandatory, and then they could offer above and beyond those tithes voluntarily.

New Testament Christians are to give as the LORD **leads** us, not because it is mandated.

Again, 2 Corinthians 9:7 So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. NKJV

How should someone give? As he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly.

A lot of churches teach and talk about tithes and offerings, but we are not stuck on a strict 10% giving. We do not tithe in a strict Old Testament sense; we give a gift or contribution.

The New Testament teaches the principle of **proportionate** giving that allows us to individually determine what percentage and what amount of our income we should give. The principle of proportionate giving states that the amount and percentage of a person's gift are to be proportionate to how God has prospered him.

1 Corinthians 16:1 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also:

1 Corinthians 16:2 On the first day of the week, let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come. NKJV

Paul was collecting for this special offering and said, “*Let each one of you lay something aside, storing up, saving that money to give as he may prosper, that there be no collection I come.*”

Because of severe persecution of the Christians at the Jerusalem church, the people had been persecuted and forced into serious poverty. Paul had been collecting money from other congregations, and he was telling the Corinthian church to prepare to give for that same cause.

We do not believe in a “**give to get**” theology, but our giving should be proportionate to how the Lord has provided for us.

Sometimes people come to faith with financial baggage called debt; contingent on someone's individual financial circumstances, they cannot necessarily give 10%.

Most new Christians don't have the faith to give 10% and trust the LORD to meet their financial needs.

A good place to start for a new believer is a lower amount and possibly go through a Christian financial stewardship course and learn to be generous over time.

As newer Christians see the Lord working, their faith will increase, and so should the percentage of their giving.

Some people are strict tithers, giving 10% of their income to the penny. While the LORD does want our **obedience**, He is interested in our hearts, not keeping the letter of the Law.

Mark 12:41 Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many who were rich put in much.

Mark 12:42 Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans.

Mark 12:43 So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury;

Mark 12:44 for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood." NKJV

Understand that although this woman gave the smallest amount of all the people that gave, what she did give represented the largest sacrifice because she literally gave all she had.

It is usually true that a person who isn't generous when he is poor will not be generous if he becomes rich.

Luke 16:10 He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much.

Luke 16:11 Therefore, if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, how will you commit to your trust the true riches? NKJV

People who say they are waiting to give until they have enough will find that they never have enough to be generous givers.

The problem is not a shortage of income; the problem is a lack of **generosity** and trust that the LORD will take care of your needs.

Philippians 4:14 Nevertheless, you have done well that you shared in my distress.

Philippians 4:15 Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only.

Philippians 4:16 For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities.

Philippians 4:17 Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account.

Philippians 4:18 Indeed, I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God.

Philippians 4:19 And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:20 Now to our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen. NKJV

The LORD doesn't need our money; He already owns everything.

Psalm 24:1 The earth is the LORD's, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein.

Psalm 24:2 For He has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters. NKJV

The LORD established giving as a means of raising His children to become more like Himself, because He is the greatest giver ever known.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. NKJV

Each time a Christian gives from a pure heart, we are acting more like our LORD.

At what age should a Christian start to give to the LORD's work? As soon as someone has the resources to give.

Giving should be a normal behavior, a **discipline** taught to children, who should learn to be generous with their allowances or other earnings.

A Christian's giving should also be in response to a need.

Acts 4:32 Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.

Acts 4:33 And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.

Acts 4:34 Nor was there anyone among them who lacked, for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold,

Acts 4:35 and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need. NKJV

Being of *one heart and one soul* tells us these early believers were interested in the same things, believed the same things, and were completely unified as if they were **one body** in Christ.

These Christians were knit together, not only with their beliefs, but they were actually of *one heart and one soul*.

This unity in the body of Christ can only happen by the Holy Spirit, and notice the effect it had on these early Christians; they began believing people were more important than possessions.

Notice, “*Neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.*”

This is very similar to what happened when the Holy Spirit fell on the original 120 at Pentecost. *Acts 2:44 Now all who believed were together and had all things in common. NKJV*

Most of these early followers were hated by their families and communities, so they were **excommunicated** by their synagogues for accepting Christ. The early followers were also hated by the Romans for refusing to worship the emperor as a god, so for these early followers, Christianity was not a religion or even a duty.

The early followers believed in Jesus with all of their being, and they were hungry for more of the LORD. The early followers didn't **entangle** themselves with things of this world, so it was easy for most of them to sell off their worldly possessions to help other followers.

Today, we are fortunate enough not to be under that same obligation as the Early Church was. But we again are pendulum people, and so the Church has swung to the other extreme.

Since the LORD has not asked us to live in a commune style of existence, a lot of followers become selfish and think they don't have to give to the work of the ministry at all.

Because these early believers believed so desperately that people needed Jesus, there was no **selfishness** or disunity in their ranks. These early followers believed that all they possessed belonged to and came from the LORD. *What was the result?*

Acts 4:33b “And great grace was upon them all.”

A Christian’s giving should be done to please the LORD and not to impress men. Our giving should be done to please God and not to impress men.

Matthew 6:1 “Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise, you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

Matthew 6:2 Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.

Matthew 6:3 But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,

Matthew 6:4 that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.”

Jesus warned His disciples about giving to show off before men; such giving is said to be theatrical, a religious **performance** designed to impress others who are watching.

Some churches make a production out of bringing the offering in front of the congregation, but Living Faith Fellowship believes giving should be between the person and the LORD. A

Christian is to give to demonstrate their love and obedience to the LORD.

2 Corinthians 8:3 For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing,

2 Corinthians 8:4 imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.

2 Corinthians 8:5 And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God.

2 Corinthians 8:6 So we urged Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also complete this grace in you as well.

2 Corinthians 8:7 But as you abound in everything — in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love for us — see that you abound in this grace also.

2 Corinthians 8:8 I speak not by commandment, but I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others.

NKJV

It is possible to give and not love the LORD, but it's not possible to love the LORD and not want to give something to Him because of the gratitude we have for Him. Worship is more than singing songs on a Sunday morning; it is a response to Who the LORD is and all that He has done for us. Giving to the LORD is a part of worship, and the first place a Christian should give to is to the Church where they fellowship.

1. Giving **acknowledges** that the LORD is the source of everything.

1 Chronicles 29:14 But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly as this? For all things come from You, and of Your own we have given You. NKJV

2. Giving demonstrates our **trust** in the LORD.

Giving requires trusting in the LORD because we must believe that the LORD will provide for our needs.

Matthew 6:33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

Matthew 6:34 Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. NKJV

3. Giving is a love **response** to the LORD's generosity.

James 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. NKJV

4. Giving supports the mission of the **local** Church.

Hank Hanegraff used to say, “*The Gospel is free, but someone has to pay for the electricity.*”

Although it is ultimately the LORD who provides for all of our needs and all of the needs of the Church, He uses the generosity of His people to accomplish that goal. Christians’ giving enables the church to fund the ministries and to equip the saints, seeing them come to maturity. It funds missionaries, pays church bills, and helps to spread the Gospel.

Ephesians 4:11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,

Ephesians 4:12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,

Ephesians 4:13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;

Ephesians 4:14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,

Ephesians 4:15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head — Christ —

Ephesians 4:16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. NKJV

5. Giving is an act of worship.

Deuteronomy 16:17 Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God which He has given you. NKJV

Giving should not be done under compulsion but as a joyful act of worship. Giving in the local church is not just a financial transaction; it is an act of worship to honor the LORD God, strengthen our trust in Him, and spread the gospel.

When a Christian gives to support Living Faith Fellowship, it keeps the church in operation to equip the saints, reach the lost, and fulfill the ministry the LORD has called this church to do.