

# Generous Giving

By

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# Contents

Introduction	4
Who's World?	8
Old Testament Understanding	12
New Testament Understanding	15
2 Corinthians Chapter 8	20
The Early Church	29
Generous Giving	34
Further Reading: Andrew Murray	41

# 1

## Introduction

I want to start with a short story someone once shared as part of a talk on giving. I love the simplicity of this story as it reminds me that many of the people who are called to give, do not often have a lot from which to give. It goes like this:

*Let me tell you about a Sunday School Teacher who asked her eager 10-year-olds if they would give £1,000,000 to the missionaries.*

"YES!" they all screamed!!

"Would you give £1,000?" Again they shouted "YES!"

"How about £100?" "Oh, YES we would!" they all agreed!!

"Would you give just a pound to the missionaries?" she asked.

The children exclaimed "YES!" just as before - except for Johnnie.

"Johnnie," the teacher said as she noticed the boy

clutching his pocket, "why didn't you say 'YES' this time?"

"Well," he said ....., "I HAVE a pound."

Too often we end up being that child, with a small amount from which to give, and end up not responding because we know that if we give from this small pot, we won't have much for ourselves. I have written this booklet therefore to summarise the area of giving and to help us all understand the important principles that the Bible teaches. This is one of those areas of church life that many church leaders hate talking about, let alone preaching about. Indeed, money always seems to be a topic least likely to be talked about in the church, as it seems to make people feel uncomfortable. Yet this is a topic that Jesus himself dealt with on a number of occasions as He taught His disciples about generous giving. It is also an important Old Testament theme, as giving goes to the heart of how we respond to God who created the world. Put simply, God created the world. He gives it to us so that we can live in this world, and because of this, we need to give back to Him.

The problem that we often have is that giving is great when it comes from someone else's pocket, but not when it has to come from our own. Especially when we see how much we need to give as a church. Part of the role of the leadership team and whoever takes on the role of treasurer, or giving officer in a church, is managing the money we give. If you are fortunate, you might be in a church with some generous givers, which means that the local church always has enough to pay the parish share - note that I'm writing this as a Church of England priest - and enough to run whatever activities you feel God is calling you to do. The problem that many churches encounter, especially those with old

buildings that need expensive maintenance, is that more often than not we have churches without those very generous givers who fund a lot of what we do. This then puts the emphasis on the rest of the congregation to give. Each year it feels like a visit to the dentist, where a painful decision has to be made about how much work needs to be done to make sure the church finances are at least in the black by the end of the year. The reality of many church situations is that church finance (or lack of it) becomes a negative one. Instead of giving joyfully and thankfully to God, we feel pressured to pay a 'church tax,' and nobody likes paying taxes!

The problem lies in how individuals approach giving. Over the years I have heard various comments from people from 'I give a lot' (which they do), to 'I can't afford to give' (so they give little), to the 'giving is not biblical' (which shows a complete lack of understanding). Yet giving is part of being a Christian and a disciple. Without giving, the church, like the temple in the Old Testament, could not work. We would not have priests who can focus on the daily needs of a parish, or money to run the activities in our church and communities. We need to recognise that God established the principle of giving at an early stage in the life of His people as a way to support the work that He wants doing in our community.

This booklet serves as a short guide, highlighting key areas of the Bible that mention giving. From this, I have drawn out some key principles. Naturally, as a short booklet, I cannot cover this topic as extensively as full-length books already written on this topic. Therefore, I encourage you to expand your learning with other books if you desire a more detailed exploration of these themes.

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# PART 1

What does the Bible say?

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## 2

# Who's World?

Let us start by looking at the Genesis story in a modern way to put this in a different perspective from the one we are used to.

God gave a person, Adam, a house and garden to live in. It was perfect in every way: the house had all the gadgets to make life a breeze; the fridge and freezer were stocked with produce from the garden (and the garden itself was perfect); the plants and animals that roamed in this very large, very well stocked garden lived in harmony. No conflict. But the human was bored. He had no one to live with, so God gave him a companion. Together they both lived in the amazing house, in the amazing perfect garden. They didn't need to work, they didn't need to worry about things, as the place that God gave them was just right to meet their every need. There was one BUT to all this. In the living room of the house there was one thing they couldn't touch or use. A box with a bright red button with the imprint of an apple on it. "Whatever you do," said God, "you must not press the button on the box of life". So they didn't.

One day there was a knock on the door, and a visitor came in. He wore dark, drab clothes, unlike the garden's bright colours, and had snake tattoos on his arms. As they prepared food and drink for the visitor, he looked around the house