

# Biblical Giving...

Welcome to a devotional session about Biblical giving! Biblical giving is a somewhat touchy subject for many Christian believers! There are many charitable, tax-exempt, community organizations, and worthy causes that vie for our donations. Biblical giving is not mentioned often in church teachings or sermons. Consequently, Biblical giving is often a misunderstood concept.

To be very clear from the beginning, God does not need money—He owns everything! He created the world from nothing and can call into being anything He wants! Giving is a reflection of our personal relationship with Christ and as such, we tend to keep it very private.

Materialism is a great temptation to Christians, especially in United States. The American way of life is to get ahead financially, to be independent, and to need no one for our well-being. We often view a person's success by the amount of material possessions they have. We even go so far as to say material possessions are also spiritual blessings, a blessing from God when He might never have wanted that for us.

The cumulative effect of our walk with Jesus is in revelations and changes. It begins with our salvation experience and grows each day as we study God's Word and apply it to our lives. Giving is one of the areas of spiritual growth that will increase as we mature spiritually.

Our goal in this short study is to provide a teaching on Biblical giving that can be used in a family setting and can act as a catalyst for family discussions, or personal Bible study. The ultimate goal is to grow in spiritual maturity with regard to our Biblical giving and train our children about Biblical giving. This study is more of a 'discovery' method than a 'fill in the blank' method. Our desire is that the Holy Spirit will reveal to you as opposed to us teaching you.

To enhance the effectiveness of the teaching, we offer these five questions for each of the studies based on the scripture, 2 Timothy 3:16-17:

**2 Tim 3:16-17** *All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.* NASU

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Each devotional has a theme and is divided into 4 lessons from scripture with some daily activities to follow the theme of the week. Each lesson has scriptures for your research. Please use these as guidelines for the days study. You may even desire to delve deeper for context and other scriptural support. Study as the Holy Spirit leads.

Below are the lessons for Biblical giving.

Lesson 1. Money and Our Relationship with God

Lesson 2. Purposes of Biblical Giving

Lesson 3. Biblical Giving in the Old Testament

Lesson 4. Biblical Giving in the New Testament

### **Lesson 1. Money and our Relationship with God.**

Wealth in and of itself is neither good nor bad, any more than having a tent or clothes. The way we gain wealth can be a problem however. Though we are daily bombarded with “get, get, get,” we must strive to keep our minds and hearts not on possessions but on God.

**Day 1-1.** The amount of money we possess is not necessarily a problem. Please read the following Scriptures: I Timothy 6:6-12, Luke 12:15.

The problem arises when our love for money overrides our proper relationship with God. Spiritual maturity is not measured by the abundance or lack of money or material possessions we have. There are several Biblical personalities who had an abundance of wealth, yet maintained a good relationship with God; for example Job (Job 1:20-22), and Abraham (Genesis 22:14-19).

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**Day 1-2.** Focus on material possessions can bring problems in our relationship with God. Please read the following scriptures: Mark 10:17-29; Proverbs 11:4, 28; and Matthew 6:19-24.

The problem wasn’t that man had money, the problem lay in his attitude about sharing his wealth. The man evidently placed his trust in his possessions. Whom must we trust, whether we have money or whether we do not have money? God! Scriptures teach us to seek the things that are above and will last eternally!

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**Day 1-3.** Biblical attitudes must reign over our possessions. Please read the following Scriptures: Hebrews 11:1-6; I Timothy 6:1-10; and Proverbs 16:16.

Contentment is an amazing attitude! Contentment is taking the current condition we are in and not worrying about it but resting in Jesus! Whether rich or poor, or somewhere in between the two, our trust is in God and His willingness to take care of us. One of the keys to Biblical giving is to be content, at peace within, regarding our possessions.

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**Day 1-4.** God owns everything. Sometimes He gives possessions to us and sometimes He takes possessions away from us. Please read the following Scriptures: Job 1:1-22, Proverbs 11:4.

When we trust God and are content with what we have, the contentment comes not from the possessions but from our relationship with God. As we value the eternal possessions God has for us, the temporal things lose their glitter. Today's news coverage gives prestige to those who have much, for example, the Fortune 500 listing. We don't have a bottom Less Fortunate 500! Our society provides pressures for us to gain wealth and hold on to it! But that is not the ways of God. Wealth is His.

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**Day 1-5.** God promises to meet all our needs. Please read Matthew 6:25-34

We were created with certain biological and spiritual necessities. We must have water or we will die. We must have food or we perish. We must exercise to maintain strength. Jesus taught us that God provides for all the animals and He will surely provide for us. However, we confuse our 'needs' with our 'wants', especially our 'really want it bad'! One of the reasons we are not Biblical givers is we fear financially for the coming days and try to provide for those days. Instead, God would have us trust Him.

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## **Lesson 2. Purposes of Biblical Giving**

As believers, we are given opportunities to express our relationship with God. Biblical giving is one of the ways we demonstrate our relation with God. We must be very clear, however, giving DOES NOT give us access to eternal life. Eternal life is through the sacrificial gift of grace by Jesus Christ. We cannot gain eternity through ANY works of our own! Paul tells us in Ephesians 2:8-10, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God not by works, so that no one can boast." NIV.

**Day 2-1.** Biblical Giving Demonstrates a Life Committed to God. Please read Proverbs 3:9-10, Exodus 13:11-16, and II Corinthians 9:7-14.

We demonstrate our commitment to God by lovingly obeying His commandments. Jesus taught us in John 14:15, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments". Part of our relationship with God is to be pleasing to Him through our actions, Biblical giving is one of those actions. How does God respond to our gifts? In II Corinthians 9:7-14, we learn that God loves a cheerful giver and will provide for them.

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**Day 2-2.** Biblical giving demonstrates our love and respect for God. Please read II Corinthians 8:7-15.

Though we may abound in faith, knowledge, and other attributes, Paul is teaching us that we should also abound in the gracious work of giving back to God. Paul was not giving this as a command but a way for us to demonstrate the sincerity of our love toward God.

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**Day 2-3.** Biblical giving represents the fruits of our labors. Please read Acts 20:26-35; Psalms 128:1-2; Proverbs 12:27, 13:4; and Ephesians 4:28.

The ability to return gifts to God is dependent on our having the gifts to give. God does not ask us to borrow from others so that we can give to Him! God's wisdom in giving is that the gifts we give are fruits of our labors. In fact, He desires the first fruits of our labor. (Deut 26:1-10)

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**Day 2-4.** Biblical giving provides for practical needs. Please read II Chronicles 31:1-21; Deuteronomy 12:5-7; Galatians 6:6, 10; I Timothy 5:17-18; and Acts 6:1-7.

God has placed the responsibility of providing for His followers on the shoulders of His followers. God recognizes the poor will always be with us (Matt 26:11) and they must be cared for. Also, there other times when specific needs arise. Each of us will eventually need the help of our brothers and sisters in Christ. God desires that we have the means and the willing heart to meet those needs.

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**Day 2-5.** Biblical giving provides for ministry missions, and other Kingdom works. Please read I Corinthians 9:4-14, II Corinthians 8:1-15, and Acts 11:27-30.

China Inland Mission founder Hudson Taylor famously said, "God's work, done God's way, will never lack God's supply." God has many Kingdom works for His followers to be about. He promises that when we are on-mission with Him that He will meet our needs. He may not meet the needs in the many we expect or even desire, but He will provide. God uses His followers to meet these needs- you and I.

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### **Lesson 3. Biblical Giving in the Old Testament**

Giving in the Old Testament was initiated as an expression of gratitude. As God brought the people of Israel out of Egypt and they were on the way to the land of promise, God spoke about giving and gave instructions, commands if you will, on how to give. Let's take a look at what the Old Testament has to say about Biblical giving!

**Day 3-1.** Different Types of Biblical Giving. Please read Deuteronomy 12:1-15.

God addresses worship many places throughout scripture. In Deuteronomy 12, God speaks to the Israelites and tells them what to avoid and what to do. He seems particularly interested in their attitude of worshiping and the subsequent action of giving. What are some of the methods God lists for giving?

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**Day 3-2.** Biblical Giving—**Tithe**. Please read Genesis 14:17-24, Hebrews 7:1-10, Genesis 28:18-22, Leviticus 27:30-33, and Numbers 18:21-28

The Tithe or tenth is the proportion of property devoted to religious uses from very early times. Instances of tithes are found prior to the appointment of the Levitical tithes under the law. The dedication of a tenth to God was recognized as a duty before the time of Moses. Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek and Jacob vowed unto the Lord and said, "Of all that thou doest give me I will surely give the tenth to thee." (Gen 28:22 NASB) God later provided the Israelites with instructions on their giving. Deuteronomy 14:22 "Be sure to set aside a tenth of all that your fields produce each year." NIV

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**Day 3-3.** Biblical Giving—**Special Offerings**. Please read Ezra 1:1-11

Special offerings are used to meet more immediate or larger than normal needs for church properties and ministries when the regular tithe is insufficient for those purposes. In most instances, we do not routinely use garage sales as a means of funding God's works. However there may arise occasions when special offerings are utilized. Ezra mentions one of those times when the children of Israel are returning from bondage and must rebuild the temple. Probably their regular tithes were nonexistent while in captivity and it would take a while for the crops and livestock to produce for first fruits. So another venue was used, a special offering was collected. This offering does not negate the giving of our regular tithe but is in addition to the tithe.

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**Day 3-4. Biblical Giving—Sacrificial Gifts.** Please read II Kings 4:8-37.

Sacrificial giving is used to support the missionaries of God. They are gifts above our tithes and above our sacrificial giving. Many missionaries are called to go places where they must totally rely on God for their survival. God gives His children the opportunity to support missionaries in unique ways. This offering does not negate the giving of our regular tithe but is in addition to the tithe.

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#### **Lesson 4. Biblical Giving in the New Testament.**

In the New Testament we see a somewhat different approach to Biblical giving. In Matthew, Jesus told us He did not come to do away with the law but rather to fulfill the law. The giving emphasis in the NT is not so much a command as it is a matter of the heart, the reflection of our relationship with God. True New Testament Biblical giving goes much farther than a simple "tithe". It includes offerings and sacrificial giving. It involves the release of control of my life, including my finances, to God. When He has control of our lives, He will use us to fund His Kingdom works.

**Lesson 4-1.** The Tithe. Please read Matthew 23:23; Luke 11:42; 18:12; Hebrews 7:5-6,8-9; Romans 14:12; 1 Corinthians 9:3-14, 16:1-3; and 2 Corinthians 8:1-9:15.

Our Tithing is a result of our relationship with God and our local church body. In the New Testament the words tithe and tithing appear only eight times. Some of the above passages refer to Old Testament usage and to current Jewish practice. Nowhere does the New Testament expressly *command* Christians to tithe. However, as believers we are to be generous in sharing our material possessions with the poor and for the support of Christian ministry.

Christ Himself is our model in giving. Giving is to be voluntary, willing, cheerful, sacrificial, and given in the light of our accountability to God. Giving should be systematic and by no means limited to a tithe of our incomes. We recognize that all we have is from God. We are called to be faithful stewards of all our possessions.

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**Lesson 4-2. Special Offerings.** Please read Acts 6:1-7

Our Special Offerings are used for church programs or other ministries. Jesus taught us that the poor would always be with us. The early church established that meeting the needs of poor within the church was a fundamental responsibility of the church. Special offerings do not negate the necessity of faithful tithing.

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**Lesson 4-3. Sacrificial Offerings.** Please read Acts 4:32-37, Philippians 4:10-19

Our Sacrificial offerings allow missionaries to go into places with the Gospel without worry about financial support. The early church recognized the need for the apostles to be free to minister as God was leading and moving them. They gave sacrificially so that the Kingdom would increase. Sacrificial offerings do not negate the necessity of faithful tithing.

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**Lesson 4-4.** Other Gifts. Please read I Timothy 6:6-21, Matthew 25:14-46.

There are many non-profit organizations worthy of financial support. These include, but certainly are not all, Little League ball teams, health drives (e.g. cancer, kidney, etc.), Goodwill, Salvation Army, and on and on! We are to be good stewards of the wealth God has entrusted to us. Giving to other organizations does not negate the necessity of faithful tithing.

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**Lesson 4-5.** Cheerful Giver. Please read II Corinthians 9:1-12, I Kings 19:15-21

“Give until it feels good!” A Godly lady felt the call of the Lord to go on the mission field. She had been a school teacher for many years as well. She felt she should give her finances to the Lord. She removed her deposits from her retirement, sold her home, gave away her cars, furniture, and other worldly possessions. She was arranging her life as Elisha did (used his oxen for a departure party), she was removing the temptation of returning to the former lifestyle and following God's call to the mission field. She wanted to rely totally on God to provide!

On one of her return visits to the states she was asked about her giving to God. She said, “When we give to God we should feel good about the giving. If we don't feel good about the giving, we probably didn't give enough and probably didn't give cheerfully!”

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