

Life Applications

Living Generously: Giving with Joy

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Scripture Base

2 Corinthians 9:7 Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give. You shouldn't give if you don't want to. You shouldn't give because you are forced to. God loves a cheerful giver. (also see Proverbs 22:9)

Icebreaker: How does Stewardship relate to giving?

What is the meaning of "decided" in your heart, if decisions are made in the mind?

Jesus said that "out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks" (Matthew 12:34). This adds up to show that if a Christian has a tender heart, a feeling heart, towards others in need, he will be prompted by that sincerity of heart to give what he can, and under no compulsion. It will be a decision to give what he can, that originates in his tender-heartedness. Even when a person is so poor as to have almost nothing to give, yet gives their all, for the Lord, that is the kind of heart-felt giving that the Lord loves. Jesus made that point with the widow dropping her last mite into the temple treasury (Mark 12:42-44). The principle about motivation for giving generously here, is the same as in 2 Corinthians 9:7. So, the answer to the question is that the heart actually determines the decision to give generously in a way that pleases God. But if the giving is done under a sense of compulsion, obligation, or in order to be thought well of by others, they will fail to give cheerfully; God will know that, and God will not love such giving.

We can learn to be a cheerful giver by studying the greatest giver this world has ever known: Jesus Christ. Leaving behind the riches and glory of His heavenly kingdom, He came to Earth and willingly gave His life so that we could keep ours. As God predestined His children to be conformed to the likeness of His Son (Romans 8:29), there can be no better way to emulate Jesus Christ than by giving selflessly the way He did. Our Savior Himself told us, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). Quite simply, then, our greatest motivation for cheerful and generous giving should be that it pleases the Lord and reflects His gift of salvation to us.

Here's another question for you: Are you a showy giver?

"But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, and with his wife's knowledge he kept back for himself some of the proceeds and brought only a part of it and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, 'Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? While it remained unsold,

did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God” (Acts 5:1-4).

Something special was happening to the believers at that time. Many who owned land and houses started selling their properties and were giving all the sales to the apostles to distribute among the fellowship. As a result, there was not a needy person among them. Enter Ananias and Sapphira. They desired to do the same as the other rich believers, but they did not want to part with all their money from their sale. So, they pretended that they were offering all when they came forward to give. But the Holy Spirit revealed their lie and hypocrisy to Peter, who confronted them with it. And God punished them with death. We might say that Ananias and Sapphira didn't deserve a harsh punishment because they still gave. Yes, that is true. But they didn't need to mislead people into believing that they were giving their all when they only gave some. “Was it not at [their] disposal?” Peter asked. There was no command to sell and give all. People gave out of the grace they received from the testimony of Jesus's resurrection!

Our Heart Posture in Giving

Why does God care about our heart posture in giving? Scripture is very clear that we decide in our hearts how much to give. This means that this is a serious matter of prayer because the offering is really to the Lord for His church and His work. It should not call attention to us, announcing the size of our gift, but should be a private matter between you and the Lord. Your offering should not be a matter of pride.

Exit Ticket

Is there a correlation between stewardship and being a cheerful giver? Explain your answer

Stewardship describes (circle your answer)

- a.) Getting money to support a church budget
- b.) Pressure to fill out a pledge card
- c.) A way to worship God
- d.) Out-of-date Old Testament laws

Stewardship relates to the way we

- a.) Manage our health
- b.) Manage our money
- c.) Manage the earth's resources
- d.) All of the above

A pledge is

- a.) Required in order to be a church member
- b.) A way of determining the church budget
- c.) A personal commitment to grow in faith
- d.) A legally-binding commitment of money

Pledging to tithe (10%) of income is

- a.) The final goal for everyone
- b.) A commitment to trust God
- c.) Required by the 10 commandments
- d.) All of the above

How much one gives should be most influenced by

- a.) Quality of preaching
- b.) Trust in church leaders
- c.) Needs of the community
- d.) Gratitude for God's blessings