

## 7. GIVE HONESTLY - ACTS 5:1-11

The next thing we will look at in regards to giving is that we are to give honestly, which makes sense and yet, that does not always take place. In Acts 5 we read the story of Ananias and Sapphira and in Acts 5:1-11 we see this story played out for us.

The problem with Ananias and Sapphira was not that they didn't give all they had to God, but they lied to God about what they gave to make themselves look good before the people and the apostles. God wants us to give honestly to Him, to be faithful about what we are giving to Him because you can't hide anything from Him. Everything is open and naked before the Lord.

Now when we are told to give to God, the first thing we think of, and maybe the only thing we think of is **MONEY, MONEY AND MORE MONEY!** You know, "Show me the Money!" mentality! We are going to look at this issue a little closer so we can see what the Scriptures have to say in regards to what God wants us to give, and you might be surprised.

### WHAT WE ARE TO GIVE TO GOD?

#### 1. GIVE YOURSELF - II CORINTHIANS 8:1-6

I think that this covers everything when we speak about giving, give yourself. Place your life on the altar of sacrifice and give yourself over totally to God, all that you have you give to Him so He can use as He desires. Paul, in II Corinthians 8:1-6 tells us, "**Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God. So we urged Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also complete this grace in you as well.**"

Here in II Corinthians chapter 8 we see that Paul is commending the believers in Macedonia for their generosity in giving. These believers were going through very difficult times, they heard what was going on with the believers in Jerusalem, the hardships they were having, and they were willing to help out at all cost their brethren in Christ. In fact Paul says they went overboard in their giving, but not because they felt they had to, but they willingly gave of themselves to help others, even beyond their own means!

Folk's, as we give of ourselves we give of our time, our talents, our gifts, and yes, even of our money to help those in need. A great example of a person who gave himself to the service of God was Epaphroditus. Paul, in Philippians 2:25-30 tells us of this man and what he did. You see, he was God centered, and others centered! He was willing to give his own life to minister to those that were in need, to those who needed to hear of Jesus and those that needed to be built up in the faith!

Again, as Jesus said, ". . . **Freely you have received, freely give.**" Matthew 10:8. When we give to God out of our own resources we are only giving back that which is already His. And as we give out of a right heart, God does bless us abundantly! You see, there are blessings as we give! But I don't want to pressure anyone into giving or make anyone feel like they have to give. That is between you and God! You give out of a cheerful heart and see the blessings that God will rain down upon you!

And when the gift of giving is poured out upon people, the giving is supernatural, it is powerful, it is more than you can imagine.

Listen to these words from Paul the apostle in II Corinthians 9:8-15. He said, "**God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work. As it is written: 'He has dispersed abroad, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.' Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness, while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God. For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God, while, through the proof of this ministry, they glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal sharing with them and all men, and by their prayer for you, who long for you because of the exceeding grace of God in you. Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!**"

The gift of giving, what a blessing it is in the body of Christ, not only to those who receive it but also for those who are the ones who give cheerfully, freely, out of love, without drawing attention to themselves, with simplicity, willing and honestly!

As Martin Luther said, "I have tried to keep things in my hands and lost them all, but what I have given into God's hands I still possess." May we not forget that! The gift of giving!

# What the Bible says about . . . Gifts of the Spirit Part 13

#### 12. THE GIFT OF GIVING

Another gift of the Spirit, one we can't avoid because it is listed as a spiritual gift, is the gift of giving! Paul, in Romans 12:3-8 lists more of these spiritual gifts that are given to us and specifically we will see the gift of giving.

Now please understand that yes we are all to give to the work of God but this is a gift of the Spirit, it is more than just normal giving. You see, the gift of giving is the supernatural ability given to a person by the Holy Spirit to give of himself, his resources, his talents to aid others. We are all called to give like I have said, but this is taken to a higher level.

When you think about it, giving goes against the very nature of man. We are very selfish when it comes to giving by nature. We want something in return for our giving and if it is not worth it to us, if it does not benefit us, we usually won't give.

On the other hand, God is very giving. We read in 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.**" Thus, by His own nature, God is giving, man is not!

The problem for us is this. In Jeremiah 13:23 we read, "**Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Then may you also do good who are accustomed to do evil.**" The answer is obvious. No an Ethiopian can't change the color of his skin. Nor can a leopard change the color of his spots. Thus, we, by our very nature, can't do good unless we are born again in Christ.

Paul tells us in I Corinthians 6:11, "**And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.**" And in II Corinthians 5:17 we read, "**Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.**" And so God can change us, and He does, even though at times that old nature rears its ugly head!



## HOW ARE WE TO GIVE?

### **1. GIVE CHEERFULLY - II CORINTHIANS 9:6-7**

Listen to what Paul tells us in II Corinthians 9:6-7 in regards on how we are to give and specifically, we are to give cheerfully. He wrote, **“But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.”**

First of all Paul uses an agricultural principle to make his point. If you sow lets say corn seeds very sparingly, when it comes time to harvest the corn, you will have very little in return. But if you sow bountifully then when harvest time comes you will reap bountifully also. I do understand many are afraid to even speak of that principle because of all the abuse, but let's not throw the baby out with the bath water. God has said it in His Word, and lets not be afraid of it.

Paul goes on to say that when we give we need to be cheerful about it, for God loves it when we give out of that kind of heart. He does not love it when we give out of compulsion, when we are forced to do so and we do it grudgingly, but when we do it out of a heart of love. In fact the word **“cheerful”** in the Greek is HILAROS, from which we get our English word “hilarious” from. In other words, God loves a hilarious giver! That is how we should give to Him.

### **2. GIVE FREELY - PSALM 54:6**

Next we are going to look at the idea of giving freely. In Psalm 54:6 we are told, **“I will freely sacrifice to You; I will praise Your name, O Lord, for it is good.”** The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, **“With a freewill offering I will sacrifice to You; I will give thanks and praise Your name, O Lord, for it is good.”** And The Living Bible says, **“Gladly I bring my sacrifices to you; I will praise your name, O Lord, for it is good.”**

You see, God wants us to give to Him freely, with no strings attached. We are not to give like this, “Lord, if I give this to you then you need to do this for me!” That is wrong. It is when we give freely; it is out of that heart attitude, that motivation, that we are blessed! I truly believe that tithing is an Old Testament principle. And please understand when I say principle that is exactly what I mean. I don't mean we have to give 10%. We can give more, we can give less, we just give freely to the Lord. In fact, when you add up all they were to give in the Old Testament, it came to around 23½ % per year in tithes. I don't hear anyone saying we must give 23½% in our tithes!

Folk's, we are living in the age of grace, and in the age of grace we are not forced to give, but again, as you sow you will also reap! We are called bondslaves of Christ, and thus we are willingly to give to Him everything, our Master, as we are under His authority.

Thus, it is all His! So when you give to God, you are giving out of a cheerful heart, or don't give at all! You are to give freely to Him or don't give at all!

### **3. GIVE OUT OF LOVE - I CORINTHIANS 13:3**

Now you might not think this one is important, but it is. We are to give out of love. Paul tells us in I Corinthians 13:3, **“And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.”**

There are many people that give but do so with the wrong attitude. In fact they become angry, resentful, bitter at times, looking down upon those who are less fortunate. God wants us to give out of love and if you can't, then don't give, because it is worthless in the eyes of God. God has given us the greatest gift, His Son and He did this out of His love for us, may we do the same for Him as we give to Him!

### **4. GIVE WITHOUT DRAWING ATTENTION TO YOURSELF – MATTHEW 6:1-4**

Also, when we give we are not to draw attention to ourselves. Jesus tells us in Matthew 6:1-4, **“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. 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. But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.”**

That is the proper attitude to have when you give, not drawing attention to yourself, because when you do, you are taking it away from God. That is why we don't have plaques of what people have donated to the church; we don't want to rob them of their rewards by giving them the glory, the attention and praise now. And so, when we give to God we are not to do so in a way that would draw attention to ourselves!

### **5. GIVE WITH SIMPLICITY - ROMANS 12:8b**

Paul, in Romans 12:8b tells us, **“he who gives, with liberality”** and what Paul is saying here when he says that we are to give with liberality, that word can be translated “simplicity.” Again, the thought is with no strings attached, no conditions. God accepts giving with no strings attached. And so the thought here is when we give we should do so generously and with simplicity.

In Psalm 50:10-12 we read, **“For every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the mountains, and the wild beasts of the field are Mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you; for the world is Mine, and all its fullness.”**

In other words, it is all the Lords and what the Lord does is He allows us to give back to Him that which He has given to us, so we can assist in the work of God, the building up of His kingdom by giving of ourselves to His people. And what a blessing it is to be able to help others in our giving.

You see, when we give to God it is not only monetary, we give of our time, of our talents, it is serving in the body of Christ and yet so many make it so complicated and it isn't. Keep it simple!

### **6. GIVE WILLINGLY - EXODUS 25:2**

The next thing we will look at in regards to our giving is that we are to give willingly. We are told in Exodus 25:2 in regards to the building of the Tabernacle, **“Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring Me an offering. From everyone who gives it willingly with his heart you shall take My offering.”**

This was a huge building project in the desert wilderness. There were no Menards or Lowe's to go and buy your supplies. These were all to be provided by the people and then constructed, put together by others. And what I want you to notice here is that there was no pressure for them to give. No one was coming to their door with a pledge sheet. They didn't get envelopes in the mail telling them to give. I remember growing up in the Catholic Church there were the envelopes for my parents each week and at times it was tough for them. What really amazed me is that they had envelopes even for the kids. There was not that idea of giving willingly to God in this and that was wrong.

But what we see here in Exodus is that God wanted Moses to tell the children of Israel, to instruct them about giving, and then only those who gave from a willing heart would be received. Now what is the result of all this when there is no pressure to give? In Exodus chapter 36 we see the result of what happens when people give willingly. We read beginning in verse 4, **“Then all the craftsmen who were doing all the work of the sanctuary came, each from the work he was doing, and they spoke to Moses, saying, ‘The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work which the LORD commanded us to do.’ So Moses gave a commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, ‘Let neither man nor woman do any more work for the offering of the sanctuary.’ And the people were restrained from bringing, for the material they had was sufficient for all the work to be done - indeed too much.”** Exodus 36:4-7.

Imagine that, Moses had to tell the people to stop bringing in their offerings; they had more than enough for the work of building the Tabernacle. And so the people had to be restrained from bringing any more. Imagine that kind of a problem! He wants you to give willingly for His work.