

Lesson 3: Generosity

I. INTRODUCTION

Some of you might be old enough to remember a rock band from the 1980s called Van Halen. Now, this is probably the first—and hopefully the last—time you’ll hear Van Halen used as a Sunday School illustration, but they’ve got a story that’s oddly relevant to what we’re going to talk about today.

Van Halen had a famously strange clause in their performance contract. Buried deep in the technical rider—Article 126—was a requirement that there had to be a bowl of M&Ms backstage. The contract further stated that every single brown M&M had to be removed. If they showed up and found even one brown M&M, they had the contractual right to cancel the show entirely and still receive full payment.

This sounds odd, extreme perhaps, but the reason behind it was anything but. Van Halen was one of the first major bands to play in smaller cities—places that weren’t used to handling massive productions. Their shows traveled with nine tractor trailers full of lights, gear, and rigging. Serious safety issues could arise if a promoter didn’t follow the setup instructions carefully. The brown M&M clause was a test. If the promoter missed that tiny detail buried in the paperwork, it was usually a red flag that other, far more important things had also been missed—like the load-bearing specs for the stage. As lead singer David Lee Roth explained: *“When I would walk backstage, if I saw a brown M&M in that bowl... well, line-check the entire production.”*

The point of this story is to point out that small things reveal big things. And while Van Halen’s reason for that principle was about pyrotechnics and scaffolding, Jesus applied it the same principle to something far more eternal. In Luke 16:10, He said, **“One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much.”** God pays attention to the little things—not because He’s petty, but because the little things always reveal the heart. Faithfulness in the ordinary things of life—what we do with our time, our words, our money—those things aren’t small details.

That brings us to the focus of today’s lesson: generosity. Generosity, in its truest form, isn’t about being wealthy. It’s not about impressive donations or getting your name on a plaque. Generosity is a heart posture. It’s a way of looking at everything God has entrusted to us and saying, *“None of this is mine. It all belongs to Him. And I want to use it in a way that makes much of Him.”* In fact, generosity is often most visible in the smallest decisions:

- Do I give when it’s inconvenient?
- Do I share when I won’t get credit?
- Do I trust God enough to give before I know how it’s all going to work out?

The answer to those questions doesn’t just reflect our finances—it reflects our faith. And so in this lesson, we’re going to examine what it means to be generous—not just as an idea, but as a way of life. We’ll explore four big questions that help us understand the heart of generosity from a biblical perspective:

1. **Why** should Christians give?
2. **What** should Christians give?
3. **Where** should Christians give?
4. **How** should Christians give?

Along the way, we'll look at biblical examples, examine our own hearts, and ask God to shape us into people who hold loosely to what we've been given so that we can cling more tightly to Him. Because in the end, generosity is about far more than money. It's about showing the world who our God is—a God who didn't just give a portion, but who gave everything in Jesus Christ.

II. WHY SHOULD CHRISTIANS GIVE?

A. Giving Shows How Great God Is

First and foremost, we give because it declares the surpassing worth of God. It says to the world and to our own hearts, "God is better." That's what Moses believed. Hebrews 11:26 says of him, "**He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.**" Moses walked away from earthly power, comfort, and riches—not because they weren't valuable, but because Christ was infinitely more valuable. It's like the parable in Matthew 13:45–46, where a man sells everything he owns to purchase one pearl of great price. Why? Because he rightly recognized the worth of what he was gaining. When we give away things the world holds dear—money, time, possessions—we are making a theological statement: God is worth more than any treasure this world can offer.

B. God Generously Gives to Us

Second, generosity reveals the depth of God's grace to us. 2 Corinthians 8:9 says, "**For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.**" We don't give to earn anything—we give because we've already received everything. When we understand that Jesus gave up glory to suffer and die for us, it becomes far easier to let go of lesser things. Our giving flows out of spiritual abundance. The early church gave sacrificially not because they were wealthy but because they were overwhelmed by grace. 2 Corinthians 8:2 describes the Macedonians, "**For in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part.**" They gave *because* they had received so richly in Christ, not because they had a lot to spare.

C. Giving Promotes Godliness

Giving helps us become more like Christ in at least four ways:

1. **Giving Reorients Our Hearts**

Jesus said in Matthew 6:21, "**For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**"

When we give, we're directing our hearts toward God and His kingdom. We're reminding ourselves where real value lies.

2. **Giving Protects Us from Idolatry**

Money is a spiritual danger. It competes for our allegiance. Jesus said in Matthew 6:24, "**You cannot serve God and money.**" Giving is like spiritual warfare. It's how we tear down the idol of wealth and declare that we belong to God.

3. **Giving Reminds Us That God Owns Everything**

Psalms 24:1 says, "**The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof.**" When we give, we're not parting with "our" money—we're returning what was already His. That's why God rebukes Israel in Malachi 3:8–10 for robbing Him when they withhold tithes and offerings. They weren't just being stingy—they were denying God's ownership.

4. **Giving Sparks Thanksgiving and Praise to God**

When you give to someone in need—whether a meal, a ride, or financial support—you're not just

meeting physical needs. You're also prompting spiritual responses. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 9:12, **"For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God."**

In other words, your generosity leads to worship. Generosity is an act of worship, a discipline of faith, and a declaration of value. When we give freely and joyfully, we show the watching world that we believe God is better, God is faithful, and God is enough. In the coming sections, we'll get into the "what," "where," and "how" of Christian giving. But as we begin, remember this: We give, not because we have to, but because we want to show the world who our God is. And He is worthy of it all.

D. Giving Brings Blessing

Let's be honest—this is one of the most misunderstood and misused teachings in the church today. Before we go chasing after the distortions, let's stop and acknowledge that the promise of blessing *is* a real biblical motivation. If we ignore it, we don't become more spiritual—we become more suspicious of God's generosity.

Luke 6:38 records Jesus saying, **"Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you."** That's a staggering picture. Jesus could have said, "Give, and you'll be repaid." But instead, He gives us this beautiful visual of a container packed down, shaken to make room for more, and overflowing into your lap. It's a picture of abundance, and of God's delight in rewarding generosity.

Paul echoes this same principle in 2 Corinthians 9:6–7, **"Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."** Let's not pretend that the promise of blessing isn't real. It is. There *is* a reward in giving. And far from being selfish, it is *godly* to be motivated by that reward, because it shows that we believe God keeps His promises and that His reward is better than what we're letting go of. There's nothing 'religious' about turning your nose up at God's offer of reward. In fact, to refuse His blessing is to slander His character. He is a generous Father. James 1:17 says, **"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights."** Refusing His gifts out of pride doesn't make you spiritual. It just makes you ungrateful. Instead, we should seek His reward—not because we think we've earned it, but because it magnifies His mercy.

Therefore, it's crucial to get the blessing right because many have gotten it very, very wrong. There are false teachers—under the name of Christ—who have turned this glorious truth into a lie wrapped in greed. You've probably heard it before: "Sow your seed in faith"—usually in the form of writing a check to the preacher—and you'll be blessed with a promotion, a spouse, a healing, or a financial windfall. T.D. Jakes, for example, is known for teaching that your "miracle harvest" is on the way if you'll just plant a "Miracle Faith Seed" in his ministry. That's not biblical stewardship—that's spiritual manipulation. It turns generosity into a formula and treats God like a vending machine.

But let's not limit the correction to prosperity preachers. Even well-meaning evangelicals can get this wrong. Perhaps you've heard something like: *"If you're not giving faithfully to your church, that's probably why you're struggling financially."* When we tie obedience too tightly to material blessing, we risk turning God's grace into a transaction. Let's be clear: material wealth is not a trustworthy indicator of someone's faithfulness. If it were, then celebrities and drug lords would be spiritual giants. Scripture never teaches that earthly riches are the litmus test for holiness. Ephesians 1:3 tells us plainly, **"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual**

blessing in the heavenly places.” Notice—it doesn’t say every *earthly* blessing. The blessings promised to believers are eternal, lasting, and spiritual. That doesn’t mean God won’t provide for our needs—He absolutely does. Philippians 4:19 assures us, **“And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”** But the promise is to meet our needs, not to guarantee comfort. In fact, what we see in the New Testament is that suffering is often part of God’s blessing.

- 2 Thessalonians 1:4 speaks of Christians **“enduring persecutions and afflictions.”**
- In Acts 9:16, Jesus says of Paul, **“I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.”**
- And in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says in Matthew 5:11–12, **“Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you... Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven.”**

In other words, your present generosity may not always lead to earthly abundance. It may lead to loss, hardship, or even persecution. But those things can still be God’s blessing, because they refine your faith and deepen your dependence on Him. So, to summarize:

- Yes, giving brings blessing.
- No, that blessing is not always material.
- Yes, it is a godly motivation to give in hope of God’s reward.
- No, it’s not godly to expect that reward to always show up as dollars in your account.

And that’s why God loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7)—because cheerful giving says, *“God’s reward is better than what I’m giving up.”* That kind of generosity reflects trust and joy in God. On the other hand, grudging, joyless giving proclaims a lie about who God is. It suggests He’s a demanding boss rather than a generous Father. But let’s be honest—what if you weren’t cheerful when you gave this week? What if you e-transferred and thought, *“I could really use this money elsewhere”*? Does that mean your gift was worthless? Not at all. That may have been an act of faith, and that’s precious in God’s eyes. You gave, not because it was easy, but because you trust that God’s use of that money is better than yours. You resisted the temptation to hoard and instead declared, *“God is worthy of my trust—even when it’s hard.”* That’s real worship.

Your motives don’t have to be perfect. If perfect motives were the requirement, none of us would ever give anything. But if your giving feels begrudging, take a moment to examine your heart. Ask yourself: *Why do I feel this way?* Is it fear? Is it pride? Is it a lack of trust? And if you just don’t *want* to give—if you’re only doing it because you feel pressured—then hear this clearly: Don’t give. 2 Corinthians 9:7 says, **“Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”** God doesn’t need your money. He’s not short on cash. But He invites you—graciously—to participate in His work. He wants you to experience the joy of investing in something eternal. How has giving become joyful for you? When has generosity led to worship? When has sacrifice opened the door to deeper trust? These are the questions worth asking—not because we’re chasing a transaction, but because we’re following a Father who delights in blessing His children.

Questions or Comments?

III. WHAT SHOULD CHRISTIANS GIVE?

So far, we’ve answered the “why” of giving—because giving declares God’s worth, reflects His generosity, shapes our hearts, and brings blessing. But now we come to a second big question: “What exactly should Christians give?” Let’s begin with the most all-encompassing answer possible—and then work our way into practical specifics.

A. Everything

As we saw in Lesson 1, God owns *everything*—our money, our time, our relationships, our influence, our strength, and even our suffering. There is no category of your life that lies outside His ownership or interest. So what does He ask of us in return? Everything! The Apostle Paul makes this breathtakingly clear in Romans 12:1, **“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.”** In other words, the proper response to the mercy of God is not a donation—it’s a complete surrender. You don’t bring a portion to the altar. You are the offering. Paul adds in 1 Corinthians 10:31, **“So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”** We don’t just give money—we give every minute, every breath, every choice, for His glory.

Too often, Christians assume that stewardship just means giving a set amount to the church and trying to live frugally. But God’s vision is far bigger and more joyful. He’s not just concerned with what percentage you donate—He’s concerned with how you manage and enjoy the entire gift of your life. Let’s say a husband and wife are considering whether they should go out for dinner once a week. The husband objects—he says they could easily eat at home and give the savings away. But what if going out to eat is a meaningful way for his wife to feel heard, connected, and nourished in her marriage? Wouldn’t that too be a God-glorifying use of money? It’s not hard to see how the Pharisees fell into this trap. In Mark 7, Jesus rebukes them for devoting gifts to God while neglecting to care for their aging parents. In their zeal to appear holy, they missed the heart of God. Jesus did not commend them—He called it hypocrisy. Or think about what happens when your toilet breaks. You could spend two hours fixing it yourself—or you could hire someone to do it and use those two hours to encourage a hurting friend. Which one glorifies God more? That depends on the season of your life, your spiritual gifts, your financial situation, and your priorities in that moment.

Here’s the point: your money is not holy simply because you give it away—and it’s not unholy just because you spend it. The real question is this: *“How does this investment—of time, of money, of energy—serve God’s purposes for my life and His people?”* God has given you all that you have to be poured out in worship. Not just on Sunday mornings. Not just in a cheque. But in every corner of your life. So what should we give? Everything.

B. Tithes & Offerings

That said, let’s get more practical. While “everything” is the overarching answer, the Bible also speaks very directly about financial giving to God’s work, particularly supporting the ministry of the local church and meeting the needs of others. So the question becomes: How much should I give to the church?

1. Old Testament Giving

In the Old Testament, God instructed His people to practice tithing—the giving of a tenth part (the word *tithe* literally means “tenth”) of their income or produce. But the picture is more complex than just “10%.” Leviticus 27:30 tells us, **“Every tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the trees, is the Lord’s; it is holy to the Lord.”** There were actually multiple tithes in the Old Testament system:

- One tithe supported the Levites, who had no land and served full-time in the tabernacle ([Numbers 18:21–24](#)).

- Another tithe was used to fund celebrations and feasts in God’s honor at the central sanctuary (Deuteronomy 14:22–27). God literally commanded His people to set aside money to rejoice in His presence.
- Every third year, a charity tithe was taken to care for the poor, the orphan, the widow, and the sojourner (Deuteronomy 14:28–29).

Beyond the tithe, the Old Testament included voluntary offerings (Deut. 12:6), gleaning laws (Lev. 19:9–10), and a temple tax (Ex. 30:11-16). Some scholars estimate that when all of this is totaled, faithful Israelites may have given closer to 23–25% of their yearly income—not counting voluntary generosity. Still, 10% remained a symbolic and significant benchmark. Long before the Law was given, Abraham gave 10% to Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18-20), and Jacob vowed to give 10% to God (Gen. 28:18-22). The tithe has a long-standing place in Scripture—even if it was never meant as a legalistic ceiling.

2. New Testament Giving

What about now? Are Christians commanded to tithe? Surprisingly, the New Testament never commands Christians to give 10%. You won’t find one single verse that says, “Each believer must tithe.” Instead, the New Testament sets a different kind of standard—one that calls us not to a percentage, but to sacrificial, cheerful, Spirit-led generosity. In 1 Corinthians 16:2, Paul gives this practical guidance, **“On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper.”** Notice the principle: regular, intentional giving, proportionate to income. Not random. Not compulsory. Not forced. But consistent and proportional. The tithe, like animal sacrifices and ceremonial festivals, was part of the Old Testament’s shadow system—a way to point forward to Christ. When Jesus came, He fulfilled the Law and transformed our worship from external obligation to internal transformation. As Jesus said in Matthew 5:17, **“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.”**

In Matthew 12:6 Jesus declared, **“Something greater than the temple is here.”** And in Matthew 17:25–26, He told Peter that the sons of the king are exempt from the temple tax—because we are now sons of God, not servants in a temple. Does that mean giving is optional? No. But it does mean that giving is no longer governed by law, but guided by love. So, if you ask: *“Am I in sin if I don’t give 10% to the church?”*—the answer isn’t a simple yes or no. For some people, given their means and calling, God may expect more than 10%. Others, based on life stage, responsibility, or need, may honor God with less. The better question is: *“Am I giving in a way that is sacrificial, joyful, and trust-filled?”*

Let’s remember this: The New Testament doesn’t ask us to meet a quota. It asks us to give our whole lives—and to use money as a tool of worship, not a measure of spiritual success. Whatever amount you give, if it’s from a heart of gratitude and joy, it pleases your Father.

3. Sacrificial Giving

Throughout the New Testament, we see that following Jesus isn’t a half-hearted commitment—it’s a life of sacrifice. Jesus doesn’t hide this. In fact, He makes it unmistakably clear. In Matthew 16:24, He says, **“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”** This is not a call to ‘get more spiritual’, this is a call to ‘die to self’—to surrender our desires, comforts, and yes, our resources—for the sake of Christ and His kingdom.

And while Jesus speaks of self-denial broadly, we also see specific examples of sacrificial financial giving in the New Testament:

- In Mark 12:41–44, Jesus praises a poor widow who puts two small coins into the temple offering box. It was all she had. And He says she gave more than all the rich, because she gave out of her poverty.
- In 2 Corinthians 8:2–3, Paul commends the Macedonian believers who, even in “**a severe test of affliction**”, gave with joyful generosity, “**beyond their means.**”

Faithful Christians are called to live in such a way that it costs them something. We don’t just give our leftovers; we give until it hurts a little—or even a lot—and trust God with the rest. But we need balance here, because there are two errors we need to avoid:

Error 1: Every Christian Must Live in Financial Pain

The first error says, “*If your budget doesn’t hurt, you’re not really following Jesus.*” That’s simply not true. Not everyone is called to take a vow of poverty. Abraham, for example, was a man of immense wealth, and yet he lived with a heart of obedience (Gen. 13:2, 14:22-23). We are all called to live sacrificially, but sacrifice may show up differently in each life. For some, it *will* mean tight finances. For others, the cost may be their time, comfort, safety, or even reputation. In any case, the heart posture is the same: “*All I am and all I have belongs to You, Lord. Use it.*” As Paul writes in Romans 12:1, “**Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.**”

Error 2: Comfort and Christianity Can Co-Exist Without Tension

The second error is more subtle—and perhaps more dangerous. It’s the assumption that we can follow Jesus without sacrifice. That we can enjoy all the comforts of this world while keeping our faith neatly tucked into Sunday morning. The Christian life is not a life of perpetual comfort. It’s a battle. It’s a daily taking up of the cross. Jesus never promised ease—He promised suffering, and with that, deep, abiding joy. 2 Corinthians 1:5 reminds us that, “**As we share abundantly in Christ’s sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too.**” So yes, sacrifice hurts—but the Lord supplies comfort for those who surrender. And when we give sacrificially, it becomes a sweet aroma to God—not because He needs our gifts, but because it shows we trust and treasure Him more than comfort.

4. Generous Giving

Generosity isn’t just a theme in Scripture—it’s woven into the very nature of God. He gives freely, lavishly, and joyfully. And when His Spirit is at work in us, our hearts begin to reflect that same liberality. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 9:6, “**Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.**” That’s just common farming logic. If you only scatter a few seeds, you’re not going to get much of a harvest. But if you plant generously, the harvest comes back in abundance. It’s not just money we’re meant to be generous with—it’s our hospitality, our encouragement, our time, our resources, our lives.

We should give generously:

- To support our local church, so that the Word is preached, disciples are made, and the saints are equipped.
- To support missionaries, both local and global, who are proclaiming Christ where He is not yet known.
- To care for the poor and vulnerable, both inside and outside the church.

- To bless our families and neighbors, showing kindness in the name of Christ.
- To encourage fellow believers, who may be struggling spiritually, emotionally, or financially.

So how much should we give? Everything. All we give and all we keep back must be laid before the Lord, and we must be able to say with integrity, *“This decision glorifies You.”* You may ask, *“Should I give more than 10%?”* For most of us, the answer is probably yes. Not because 10% is too little, but because it’s often too safe. The more God gives, the more opportunity we have to excel in the grace of giving (2 Cor. 8:7). Let’s be bold. Let’s be joyfully generous.

Questions or Comments?

IV. WHERE SHOULD CHRISTIANS GIVE?

A. Obligations

A natural question arises: Where should we give? The Bible gives us both priorities and possibilities. Let’s begin with what we are obligated to do.

1. Your Family Comes First

In 1 Timothy 5:8, Paul writes, **“But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”** This is strong language. Providing for our families isn’t optional—it’s fundamental to living a faithful Christian life. That includes meeting their basic needs, supporting dependents, and stewarding our resources with responsibility and love.

2. Support Your Local Church

Once those essential family obligations are met, the next priority in Scripture is giving to the local church. Paul says in Galatians 6:6, **“Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches.”** This mirrors the Old Testament pattern of supporting the Levites, who were set apart to teach and serve God’s people. Your primary spiritual feeding comes from your local church, so your primary giving should go there. That’s not legalism—it’s wisdom. Your generosity fuels the ministry that’s helping you grow. And, practically speaking, most churches depend on consistent giving to budget wisely, support their leaders, and care for their congregations. Giving to your local church isn’t the *only* form of faithful giving—but it’s a vital one.

B. Opportunities

Beyond these responsibilities, the New Testament encourages giving based on opportunity. In 2 Corinthians 8:8, Paul makes clear that he’s not commanding the Corinthians to give to the suffering churches in Judea—but he appeals to their generosity. It’s an invitation, not an obligation. Once your family is provided for and your church is supported, the question becomes: *“How can I best use the rest of what God has given me for His glory?”* Here are just a few ideas:

- **Give more to your church.** If you believe in the ministry, why not help it grow?
- **Support global missions.** Join in God’s work across the world.

- **Host a neighborhood meal.** Use your home and your resources to meet non-Christians and show them Christ.
- **Help a friend in need.** Quiet, personal acts of mercy are deeply pleasing to God.
- **Fund Christian counseling** for someone who can't afford it.
- **Lend your car** to a young adult who can't afford one yet.
- **Give anonymously** to someone who's struggling—and let them praise God, not you.

And one more practical note: If you do lend money to another believer in a time of need, Scripture is very clear: don't charge them interest. Exodus 22:25 says, **"If you lend money to any of my people with you who is poor, you shall not be like a moneylender to him, and you shall not exact interest from him."** Jesus echoes this in Luke 6:34–36, reminding us to lend without expecting repayment—and to show mercy as our Father is merciful.

Not Giving to the Church

What should we do if we don't want to give to the church because we disagree with how the funds are being used? Let's be honest—this happens. Maybe the church spends too much on technology. Maybe the building renovations feel excessive. Maybe decisions are made that you weren't consulted on. The temptation is to withhold giving or to attach strings to donations. But Scripture gives us a better path.

First, if the issue is one of doctrinal unfaithfulness (the church no longer teaches the gospel, has strayed from the commands of Christ, or is actively promoting false doctrine) then it is not only appropriate but necessary to withdraw support. 2 John 9–11 warns believers not to support those who do not remain in the teaching of Christ. Your giving is part of your endorsement.

But if the disagreement is secondary (spending decisions, ministry priorities, or stylistic choices) then the call is not to withhold giving, but to pursue unity. 1 Corinthians 1:10 urges the church to **"agree... and that there be no divisions among you."** Our giving in these cases is a test of faith, not finances. At a minimum, we must support our church's spiritual leadership. 1 Timothy 5:17–18 says, **"Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching... The laborer deserves his wages."** If we withhold giving altogether, we risk disobedience, not just disagreement. Be careful, too, of restricting your gift so narrowly that it becomes a tool of control rather than an act of faith. Ask yourself: *Is this about gospel stewardship, or about getting my way?*

Giving to Non-Christian Organizations

Can Christians give to non-Christian organizations? Yes, with wisdom. We live in a world where God's common grace is at work everywhere. A secular organization that feeds the hungry or provides clean water can still be doing God-honoring work, even if they don't recognize Him. 2 John 9–11 also applies here. We must never support groups that are actively opposed to the gospel or promote anti-Christian agendas. You wouldn't give to a group doing good humanitarian work if they also advocated against biblical morality or mocked Christ. All things being equal, Christian organizations should be your priority. Why? Because they not only meet physical needs, but also eternal needs. A cup of cold water given *in Jesus' name* (Matt. 10:42) is better than a banquet with no gospel attached.

Online Giving

What about online giving? Scripture encourages giving to be regular, worshipful, and intentional. 1 Corinthians 16:2 says, **“On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside.”** Many Christians find that online giving helps with regularity. Scheduled giving can prevent forgetfulness and ensure consistency. The concern, of course, is that it becomes mechanical or cold. But that’s not a problem with online giving—that’s a heart problem. Someone can just as easily robotically write a check each week. Whether you give with your phone, your envelope, or a transfer—God wants your heart. 2 Corinthians 9:7 reminds us, **“God loves a cheerful giver.”** The antidote to mechanical giving isn’t to stop giving—it’s to preach the gospel to yourself every time you do. Every gift is a reminder: *Christ gave everything for me. How can I not return to Him what’s already His?*

Questions or Comments?

V. How Should Christians Give?

Finally, let’s answer the question of *how* we should give. To do this, we’re going to primarily look at what Paul says 1 Corinthians 16:2: **“On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come.”** There are five biblical admonitions that we can take from this verse.

1. Periodic

We should give regularly. Paul says, **“On the first day of every week,”** when the church gathered. Do we give our firstfruits up front or do we give out of what’s leftover at the end of the year or the end of our lives? In Exodus 36 when Moses asked for freewill offerings to help construct the sanctuary, the Israelites gave so much that Moses gave an order to stop giving. By delay, some people lost the opportunity to obey.

Leftover Income

What should you do with money left over after giving and expenses? This is a place of Christian freedom, but with guardrails.

- You could pay off debt. Proverbs 22:7 warns that the borrower is a slave to the lender. Getting out of debt increases flexibility for future giving.
- You could give more. If you don’t need it, bless others. Proverbs 11:25 says, **“Whoever brings blessing will be enriched.”**
- You could save. Planning for known needs is wise, as long as you don’t hoard. Proverbs 6:6–8 praises the ant for storing up food.

Just remember that leftover income still belongs to God. So ask: *What would bring Him the most glory with this portion of His money?*

No Leftover Income

Is it ever okay not to give? There are seasons when money is tight. Bills, groceries, medicine. But Scripture still speaks to this: Matthew 6:2 assumes giving, **“When you give to the needy…”** not *if*. Timothy 6:18 commands even the wealthy to be generous, but the spirit applies to all of us. Even giving a small amount can grow your faith and build a generous heart. Don’t miss out on the joy of giving just because it feels insignificant. God doesn’t need large sums—He looks at faithfulness and motive. Remember the widow’s mite? God notices the smallest offerings given in love.

Giving in Faith

Should you ever give beyond your means? 1 Corinthians 16:2 says giving should be planned and proportional. Don't give recklessly and fall into debt. But Scripture also speaks of giving in faith, the Macedonians gave **"beyond their means, of their own accord"** (2 Cor. 8:3). And the poor widow in Mark 12:44 gave **"all she had to live on."** It's not wrong to give when it stretches you—as long as it's not manipulative, presumptuous, or done without planning. That's the beauty of firstfruits giving: giving to God before you know how the rest of the month will shake out. Proverbs 3:9–10 says, **"Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty..."** Give in a way that stretches your faith—but never in a way that displaces your responsibility or wisdom. Faithful giving is not reckless—it's *trusting*.

Prosperity Gospel

What's wrong with the prosperity gospel? It's not just bad theology—it's a false gospel. The prosperity gospel teaches that faith + giving = guaranteed blessing, usually in the form of health or wealth. Teachers claim God has set spiritual "laws" in place, and if you use your words, sow your seed, and believe strongly enough, God must bless you. This turns God into a tool for our happiness rather than the sovereign Lord of our lives. But the true gospel says Jesus died to save us from our sins, not our bills. God may bless materially—but He also allows suffering. In fact, Scripture promises it. Acts 14:22 says, **"Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."** The prosperity gospel elevates man and shrinks God down to a servant of human desires. But Christ calls us to sacrifice, humility, and endurance. We give not to get, but because we've already been given everything in Christ.

2. Personal

We're *each* responsible to give. Paul says, **"each of you."** We can't assume that just because the church is giving, we're giving.

3. Planned

We should give some deliberate thought to our giving. Paul says to **put aside** our money. When we plan our budgets, we should plan our giving. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 9:7, **"Each one must give as he has decided in his heart."** This is a decision to pray about and think about. It's not one you make in the spur of the moment on Sunday morning.

4. Progressive

We should give according to our means. Paul says someone should give **"as he may prosper."** The more God prospers us, the more we give. And presumably, the more God prospers us the higher portion we give.

For example, let's say that Believer A has an income of \$30,000 per year and Believer B receives \$60,000 per year. Both give 10% of their income. With everything else being equal, has Believer B given progressively? No, they haven't. After giving, Believer A has \$27,000 left to live on, and Believer B has \$54,000, or twice as much. Believer B could actually give 20% and still have over \$20,000 more to live on than Believer A. Remember, generosity is not marked by how much we give, but by how much we keep.

5. Plentiful

Our giving is to be generous. Paul concludes his instruction saying, **"so that there will be no collecting when I come."** We should give plentifully as we reflect on all that God has given us in Christ.

6. Private

Our giving should be private—before God, not to impress others. Jesus teaches this clearly in Matthew 6:3–4, **“But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”** Why is this important? Because public generosity often comes with temptation—to seek credit, praise, or reputation. But God is not interested in how others perceive us. He sees the quiet gift, the unnoticed transfer, the envelope slipped into the offering box with no fanfare. Privacy protects our hearts from pride and reminds us: *I’m giving for an audience of One.*

Questions or Comments?

VI. CONCLUSION

“It is more blessed to give than to receive.” – Acts 20:35. These aren’t just poetic words—they’re a promise. A generous life is a blessed life. The joy of seeing your money used to advance the gospel, feed the hungry, care for the hurting, and build up the church—is unmatched. Money is powerful. But in the hands of the Spirit-filled believer, money becomes a weapon of joy, a tool of worship, and a seed of eternal fruit. So let’s grow. Let’s excel in the grace of giving. Let’s be found faithful—and be ready for God to entrust us with more.

Gracious Father,

We come before You as stewards—people who have been given far more than we deserve. You have lavished us with grace in Christ, adopting us into Your family, and entrusting us with time, resources, relationships, and gifts to be used for Your glory.

Thank You for the reminder today that everything we have is Yours. Our bank accounts, our skills, our homes, our breath—all of it belongs to You. Forgive us, Lord, for the ways we have clung too tightly to what was never ours to begin with. Forgive us for our fear, our pride, our misplaced trust in riches, and for every moment we’ve chosen comfort over faithfulness.

Lord, we confess that giving is not always easy. Sometimes it feels risky. Sometimes it feels small. But Your Word teaches us that even the widow’s two coins were precious in Your sight. Help us to give with that same faith. Teach us to loosen our grip, not out of guilt, but out of love for You and trust in Your promises.

Create in us cheerful hearts that delight to give—not just money, but our whole selves. May we reflect Your generosity in the way we serve, the way we love, and the way we live.

We pray, God, that our giving—whether public or private, large or small—would always speak one thing clearly: *You are worthy.* Worthy of all our praise, all our resources, and all our lives.

Help us to lay up treasures in heaven. Help us to give generously, sacrificially, and wisely. And may our joy in giving become a testimony to a watching world that we belong to a far better Kingdom.

We ask this in the name of Jesus, Our Savior, our Treasure, our King. Amen.