



Worship – Part 38
Acts of Worship – Part 26
Worshipping God with Our Treasure – Part 10
GCSP – 02/23/2008

As Christians, the Bible clearly states over and over again that we are to impact unbelievers with our lifestyle, both personally and corporately as a church. This kind of witness to the world involves many things; our ethics, our morality, our attitudes, and our actions. One aspect of our lifestyle that stands out and shines brightly to those around us is the way we view and use our material possessions. I submit to you that the New Testament record asserts the extent in which we are faithful in this area of our lives correlates to the impact we are able to have on unbelievers for the cause of Christ – which unfortunately means that those Christians who do not have a biblical view of material possessions are negatively impacting unbelievers.

Tonight I am bringing to you our tenth sermon on this topic so we may ensure that we do have a proper biblical view of material possessions, and unless the Lord adjusts my plans we should be able to wrap up this series next week; and in doing so we will also wrap up this lengthy series on worship and turn our attention to a study of Jesus by way of the Gospel of Matthew. Our mission statement as a church is “To know Jesus and to make Him known” and I can think of no better way to know Him than to study His life as recorded for us in God’s Word – but we still have some ground to cover on our current topic.

Let’s Pray.

Let me quickly review for the benefit of those who may have missed one of the last two sermons and also to refresh the memories of those who have been with us.

We went through the Old Testament to determine what the tithe represented and who it was for. We discovered that the Old Testament tithe was actually three separate 10% requirements placed on the nation of Israel to support various functions of their government, worship, and welfare system. We also discovered that when Jesus died on the Cross of Calvary that the overwhelming majority of the purpose for Israel’s tithing system was done away with.

Last week we began looking at a series of divine principles in the New Testament that will help all of us to develop an understanding of God’s plan for us in this worship of giving.

I gave you a few warnings concerning issues you may possibly struggle with in hearing these principles. Let state them again.

First, there is an inherent danger that you will build some internal walls in your mind to the teaching of Scripture on this topic. Primarily because you have already determined how, what, and where you give; and you may not want anything else to muddle that determination in your mind. Or possibly for some, you do not want to add to the guilt you already feel for your lack in this area. So tear down those walls and give ear to what the Spirit of God desires to teach you tonight.

Secondly, there is a danger that you will struggle with your giving because the New Testament does not simply tell you to give “x” amount or “x” percentage of your income. And just as most churches lack in teachers, workers, and volunteers because the needs are usually not specific enough, when we do not have specifics we many times do not act at all; we become somewhat paralyzed, which is right where Satan wants you.

I mentioned last time that throughout my ministry I have had people tell me that God owns everything and God does not have need of anything so there is no need for me to give anything. And while logically speaking that is true, God does not operate on human logic. God commands us to give and if we choose not to give we are in violation of His Word – we sin.

The third danger is not getting a grasp on all of the principles of giving to see how they work in concert with one another. If you only hear the few principles tonight apart from the last week and next week, you will be building your philosophy of giving based upon partial information, and you may be deceived and possibly be expecting the blessing of God's promises under false pretenses.

The first divine principle for giving was found in **Acts 11:27-30**.

1. Each According to His Ability

We spent some time answering the question, what determines my ability to give? And then we looked at what is currently hindering our ability to give.

There are legitimate times in your life when your ability to give is hindered by God, but most Christians in this country have self-hindered their ability to give. They have squandered a good portion of what God has provided on the needless and wasteful desires of the flesh. Most Christians have never been in the habit of giving when times were good so they definitely curtail their giving when times are not so good. Most Christians in this country do not have the ability to give because of their bad habits and their disobedience to God's Word in handling the money He gives them.

We looked at the plight of the Macedonian Christians in **2 Corinthians 8** and we found that the key to their being able to give even in their deep poverty was they had first given themselves wholly to God and submitted to the authority of the leaders of the church.

So generally speaking, all Christians can and should participate in the worship of giving, regardless of how small the amount may be.

The second divine principle for giving was found in **1 Corinthians 16:1-2**.

2. Giving Regularly, Systematically, and Proportionally

The principle is that as you receive from the Lord you are to regularly put aside a portion of that increase to give to the church. This passage also implies giving systematically, meaning you have a system for your regular giving. You don't just deposit your paycheck, pay your bills, go shopping, and then on the weekend look to see if anything is left to give to God. If you determine that you only have a nickel to set aside and you give that nickel with a heart of worship, then God will accept your offering and be pleased with you, and He will increase your ability to give as you continue to obey His Word.

Don't try to analyze it, don't try to figure out how God will give to you, just believe what His Word says and be obedient – leave the details to God.

So give regularly by setting aside a portion of what you receive every time you receive; give systematically by determining in advance that you will give off the top even if it is a meager amount in your own eyes, and lastly give proportionally, meaning giving a certain percentage of you increase.

Proportional giving is where most defenders of the tithe will point to so before we look at the next few divine principles for giving, turn with me in your Bibles to the only passage that even mentions the tithe after the New Testament church is established in the Book of Acts – **Hebrews 7**.

Hebrews 7:1-10

The tithe is obviously mentioned in this passage, as it relates the account we read from **Genesis 14** a few weeks ago, but this passage does not reinstate the tithe for the church. The context of this passage is confirming the validity of God's covenant with Abraham and thus confirming that the new covenant through the work of Jesus Christ is also valid. The comparison is between Melchizedek as a king and high priest during the time of Abraham and Jesus Christ as a better King and High Priest today.

That being said, you would not be out of line in concluding that if it was just and right for Melchizedek to receive a tithe, as the lesser king, giving a tithe to the greater King is only reasonable. I cannot deny the logic of that line of thinking, but at the same time I can confidently assert that the tithe is not commanded in this or any other passage in the New Testament.

Let me read from one of the commentaries I used in my studies this week, and that I agree with:

"Under grace we are free from the demands of the (ceremonial) Law. The New Testament specifies no definite amount or proportion of our money that we are to give to God. But this does not mean giving is optional, or that it should depend on our whim or personal feeling. It means that the basis of our giving should be our love and devotion to God, in gratitude for His inestimable gift to us. Just as Melchizedek's priesthood is a type of the priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ, so Abraham's giving to Melchizedek is a type of what our giving to the Lord should be. It is not (necessarily) a type in its being a tenth, but in its being from his choicest possessions and being given freely, not because of legal requirement" – John MacArthur Jr.

We could obviously take several weeks to analyze and dissect this passage, but the bottom line is the context concerns the lesser and greater priesthoods of Melchizedek and Jesus and the validity of God's covenants, not whether or not the tithe is the model for giving in the church.

Let's move on to a third divine principle for giving.

3. Responding Immediately

Turn with me in your Bibles to **2 Corinthians 8**.

2 Corinthians 8:7-15

The key to this principle is in **verses 11-12** where it speaks of the readiness of the Corinthians to give. The Corinthian believers were having trouble collecting the amount of money they had hoped to give. Whether they were overly enthusiastic at first or they based the amount of their gift on their determination apart from seeking God's direction, we do not know. We do know that they were not fulfilling what they had promised.

When it came time to collect the offering they were not ready. The implication of the entire passage, which covers both chapter 8 and chapter 9, is that the Corinthians had not been faithful to respond immediately. They did not put aside a portion of their increase on a weekly basis and thus did what most people do – they spent it.

But Paul was not reprimanding them for this lack of foresight. The lesson was stated for their future benefit – be careful to put aside a portion each week – but Paul simply now tells them to

give according to what they have and not what they do not have. Money spent is money spent. They could not go back in time and correct the past. They were simply to begin again.

The same principle is true for us today. Develop the habit of putting aside a portion of your increase and don't let the guilt of past failures to paralyze you today. If you are living week-to-week as most are in this society and there is simply not anything available, consider giving up something. Skip a meal and give that savings. If you have a bad habit to break, give up buying the object of that habit and give that savings. Start over. Begin again. If your heart is in the right place the Lord will show you where to find a small portion of your increase to give.

A fourth divine principle for giving is found in **2 Corinthians 9**.

4. Giving Based on Faith Promises

2 Corinthians 9:1-5

The Corinthians had made a generous promise to give. They were not presuming upon God in the amount they had promised or Paul would have mentioned that, instead they had made a promise that required a measure of faith to complete.

There is a line that can be crossed over when giving in this manner. It is the line between sensing and following the Holy Spirit's leading in your life and presuming upon God by following your own whims and desires. If the Holy Spirit is not leading you to give "x" amount and you do it anyway, your giving can turn into a presumption on God's goodness instead of an offering given by faith in God's goodness.

Let me illustrate by a practice one of my past churches was in the habit of doing. Once a year this church held a missions conference. We would bring in several missionaries to speak, we would hold a banquet, and at the end of the week we would pass out "Faith Promise" cards to all in attendance. Everyone would be encouraged to make a commitment to give a specific amount each week to Faith Promise Missions. Some of the speakers would even go so far as to encourage you to give more than your budget would allow – otherwise it wasn't giving in faith. You have to give beyond what was humanly possible and allow the Lord to make up the deficit.

Now, the problem with this type of crowd hysteria is that for most, the Holy Spirit is left out of the equation. People got swept up in the excitement of the moment and promise a weekly amount based on their emotions, not based on God's leading in their life. Typically, at the end of the year the amount collected for Faith Promise Missions was 50-60% of what was written down on the cards. And the sad thing is, churches begin to base their mission budget on 50-60% of what is promised instead of making the effort to teach the people how to discern the Holy Spirit's leading in giving by faith.

I am not saying churches should not hold missions conferences, they can be tremendous times of seeing the work God is doing outside of our narrow focus and I have seen people be called by God to go to the mission field during these times. I am not even saying that a plea for giving to missions should not be made at these conferences. I am saying that more teaching on the principles of giving and the principles of discerning the Spirit's voice are needed prior to asking for any commitments from the people. And besides that, I greatly struggle with commitment cards of any kind even though I understand how they can help churches that adhere to a budget – but that's a soapbox for another day.

God does not want us to be foolish and unrealistic in our promises to give, but He also does not want us to be reserved and hesitant. Beyond all other things, giving is an act of obedience to God and an act of faith and trust in God. And giving requires wisdom, planning, prayer, an

understanding of God's Word, and sometimes the godly advice of other mature Christians you trust; which leads us to divine principle #5.

5. Giving Willingly

2 Corinthians 9:6-8

If we have followed the first four divine principles for giving, the principle of giving willingly will be natural. When money has been set aside, when it is available for giving and when the giving has been planned by understanding God's Word and following the leading of the Holy Spirit, it will be a joyful and willing gift. There will be times when you simply cannot wait to walk in here and drop your gift into the basket – and that is how our worship should be in every area of our life.

If you have not planned your giving; if you have not purposed in your heart to give; then your giving will not be joyful. Most Americans, which includes most Christians, allow their standard of living to rise with their increased incomes. So giving can easily be squeezed out of the equation if has not been carefully and prayerfully planned. Then when you feel compelled to give it will definitely not be a joyful experience.

It is these people who will be the ones who complain about the pastor always preaching about money, when in fact the topic is only broached once in a great while.

A sixth divine principle for giving is found in a passage we already read.

6. Avoiding Embarrassment

2 Corinthians 9:3-4

The Bible is clear that we are to keep our word and thus God warns us to about making vows. Let your yea be yea and let your nay be nay, the Scripture says; meaning our word should indeed be our bond. The Corinthians were in danger of going back on their word and not only embarrassing themselves but also embarrassing Paul who had proclaimed the promise of their bountiful gift to encourage other churches to give in like manner.

This is another reason I am opposed to commitment cards in churches for giving to missions or to building programs and the like.

Obviously there will be unforeseen circumstances that interfere with Christians to give as they had hoped and planned for, and possibly even promised, however, as was the case with the Corinthians, many times this lack in being able to follow through is due to self-negligence. This habit of behavior makes things extremely difficult for most churches in this world to operate as they should. This should not be the habit of those who claim Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Let's get one more divine principle for giving in before I close this evening.

7. Planning Ahead for Emergency Giving

Turn with me in your Bibles ahead a few pages to **Galatians 6**.

Galatians 6:6-10

As a side note on this passage, let me share with you one of the joys of being a pastor/teacher. A man that was part of a Bible study I taught was really maturing in his faith for the first time in his life. He was hungry for the Word of God and was studying Scripture on his own besides attending this Bible study. One day out of the blue He sent Connie and I a check and in the notes

section of the check he had written **Galatians 6:6**. The gift was appreciated but the true joy in my heart was how he had obviously read this verse on his own and was applying as he understood it – the one being taught was sharing with the one who did the teaching. I praised God for the spiritual growth in this man and how privileged I was to have a small part in it.

The principle I want us to learn in this passage is primarily in **verse 10** where it says, “**while we have opportunity.**” The implication seems to me to be two-fold; number one, take advantage of the opportunities you have to give for you are not promised in this life that you will always have an abundance of material possessions. The conditions we live in are only a successful terrorist plot away from economic collapse as we know it. Proverbs tells us that our money has wings and flies away like the birds of the air, so take advantage of the opportunities God provides for you to give.

The second implication is to plan ahead and be prepared. As God prospers you consider putting aside funds for those times when needs arise. I’ve heard of Christians who actually have a separate bank account for this purpose. They regularly save money during the times of plenty for the express purpose of giving when needs present themselves. It may be a special mission’s project, a gift of benevolence, or a ministry that has a special need that God reveals, but they are now prepared to use give as God directs to these special projects.

Well we covered five divine principles for giving and I have 5 or 6 left for next time. I trust the Spirit has used our time together to reveal to you a principle or two that helps you in this grace and worship of giving.

Let’s pray.