

Giving as Worship

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Following are some thoughts on “giving as worship,” what it is, and how and why it should be done.

First, we must define what we’re talking about. Although “giving” can apply to many things, for this discussion we are primarily talking about “giving money as worship.”

For most people, money is tied to their labor, and usually is regarded as being necessary for survival in our society. Unless a person inherited money or had some large windfall, their money reflects something they earned through hard, sometimes unfulfilling work that required a great deal of time and effort. Often the return they receive seems too small to meet their needs and desires. Then, before they even actually get their earnings, a large amount is taken out to pay for a government that can’t control its spending and a social “security” that seems very insecure.

On top of that, shelter costs money, food costs money, a myriad of various insurances cost money, electricity, phone and heat cost money, water costs money, gasoline costs money, and on and on it goes. (Oh, and did we talk about the church and many other organizations asking for money?)

After Adam’s sin, mankind’s labor became more difficult, and to a certain degree more frustrating and less fulfilling (Genesis 3:17-19).

So where does God fit into all this? What does God really want from us? Is it money? Maybe it’s sacrifice or service or effort or achievement. Could it be adoration or religious ritual? Does He simply want our worship, and if so, what does that include?

The Bible says “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” (John 4:24 English Standard Version). People evaluate outward appearance and actions, but God looks directly at a person’s heart (1 Sam 16:7). Therefore, each must worship God from their heart.

But what does it mean to “worship”? According to Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible, the Greek word translated in the Bible as “worship” means literally or figuratively to “prostrate oneself in homage (do reverence to, adore.)”¹

Therefore, we are told that from the heart we are to honestly humble ourselves before God and give Him the reverence He deserves. This must be done truthfully. We cannot fool God, and dare not fool ourselves. We are to present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God. This is our “true worship.” (Rom 12:1 New International Version).

So then, what is “giving as worship”? We know we are to give our bodies as a living sacrifice. This not only means by taking care of our body and avoiding sin, but also giving from what we produced through our efforts in our work. Colossians 3:23 says we should work hard at whatever we do as though we are doing it for God.

For most people today, we are using our bodies and minds to produce something for which we receive money. We normally don’t get paid with beads or bushels of grain, but with the good old American dollar.

¹ James Strong. *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. McLean, VA: MacDonald Publishing Company; Greek Dictionary Reference 4352.

So, what's the problem? It may be that we don't necessarily believe we will have enough money for everything we need and want, and therefore limit the amount we are willing to give away. We don't fully trust God will provide us with everything we *want*, and we certainly don't want other people to tell us what to do with our money.

Materialism is a large issue in our society. It's easy to put one's self first. I have needs and wants, and indeed obligations that must be met. I can't rely on someone else to give me as much as I need, much less as much as I may want. After all, they're probably putting themselves first too.

We recently saw a great example of people putting their needs first by hoarding toilet paper of all things! What if things really got bad in society? I was once astounded about how crazy people got trying to get miniature boxes of cereal that were being thrown to the crowd during a RedHawk's baseball game. What if there really was a scarcity of food?

The use of money is often a problem area in marriages. The Bible says in Mark 8 that the two are to become one and in Ephesians 5 that it's a picture of Christ and the church. Some marriages have "his money" and "her money" instead of it *all* being "our money." It seems the same as a Christian who is supposed to be "married" to Christ but wants to limit His access to the bank account.

Some struggle with sins of the body. Some struggle with sins of the mind and heart. We all to one degree or another struggle living that "perfect" life that only Jesus lived. (I've never yet paid my taxes with money from the mouth of a fish I caught!)

What is the hardest thing for someone to give? It's whatever they value the most or are most afraid to lose. Anything we value more than God is actually like bowing down to an idol and causes us to violate the greatest commandment of loving God more than anything else. It could be money or possessions or status or children or many other things.

God the Father *gave* us His most prized possession. Jesus Christ was the only one who always did the Father's will. He was the only one who completely trusted the Father and had a perfect unbroken relationship with Him, which was God's intention for mankind in the first place.

Jesus Christ *gave* himself for the Father's will and for us. Not only did he undergo horrible physical torture, but after living a perfect life and relying on the Father for everything, at the end cried, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matt 27:46 NIV).

We must give God our everything. It is foolish and self-defeating to place anything higher than God, especially when He has promised to give us everything we need. He doesn't want 10% plus a little. He wants 100%! We are to love God with all we have and love our neighbor as our self (Matt 27:36-39).

You mean He wants all my money? Of course not. He is the One who gives us the ability to get wealth! (Deut. 8:18). The cattle on a thousand hills are His. (Psalm 50:10). The entire creation is His. (Psalm 24:1). Everything we give comes from His hand. (I Chronicles 29:14). What He wants is all our love and faith and trust in believing that He is who He says He is. He wants us to give with joy out of a grateful heart that has sincerely decided what to give, not "reluctantly or under compulsion." (2 Cor 9:7 NIV).

If people feel pressured to give, they may tire of hearing the message, assign negative motives to the requester, and eventually leave to get away from the pressure. Even if they comply, but for the wrong reasons, they lose the joy and rewards of giving.

For each of us, the challenge is how to give in the way God has shown so we can be blessed in all things. If we can do this, our giving becomes a true act of worship.