

LIFE WITHIN THE FELLOWSHIP



5. Giving

We have been learning about life within the church fellowship and what we do when we meet together. One of the things we do is spend time in worship, and one of the ways we express our worship is by giving. 1 Corinthians 16:2. Why should we give? Let's answer that question now.

WHY SHOULD WE GIVE?

Let's look at three reasons why we should give.

1. Everything Belongs to God

God created the world and everything in it, and he also created us with the ability to make things. So everything belongs to God, even the things we have made. Although parents provide for their children and men and women work to support themselves, ultimately it is God who has provided for us.

In the Old Testament there is a wonderful account of how the people gave so their temple could be built. We are told they gave willingly to the Lord. King David then prayed for all the people, and in 1 Chronicles 29:11-14 he said, "You are great and powerful, glorious, splendid and majestic. Everything in heaven and on earth is yours, and you are King, supreme ruler over all. All riches and wealth come from you. Yet my people and I cannot really give you anything, because everything is a gift from you, and we have only given back what is yours already." King David knew that everything belonged to the Lord.

It is the same with us. When we give we are only giving back to God what he owns. The Bible teaches us that we are stewards or servants of all that God has given us and one day we will need to give an account of how we have used these things.

2. We Should Willingly Give

Although everything belongs to God, he freely gives us all we need. 1 Timothy 6:17. God's nature and character is to give, because he loves us. The greatest gift God has given us is his Son. God wants us to return that love, and one way we can do this is by giving. This is part of our worship as we see in Philippians 4:18. Let's give, not because we feel obligated, but to show our love to God.

3. It is a Command to Give

The world's way is to get all you can, even if you are dishonest or cheat, to do so. God's way is very different, and when we learn to give, God's blessings are released in our lives. As we are faithful to give, God will provide our needs. In fact we are commanded to give.

In Philippians 4:16-20 there is a wonderful promise of provision, but notice that Paul is thanking these believers for their gifts. We see that same thing in Luke 6:38, where we are told to give, and we will receive the same measure in return. When we give to the Lord we are storing up riches in Heaven.

What we store up here in this world won't last, but what we store in the bank of Heaven will remain forever.

WHAT SHOULD WE GIVE?

The Bible speaks of two kinds of giving. The first is tithes and the second is offerings.

1. Tithes

When we give our lives to Jesus, all we have is his. However, he specifically tells us to give the first tenth of our income to him. This is called the tithes. We see this principle in the book of Genesis where both Abraham and Jacob gave a tenth to the Lord.

Later when God gave the Commandments to his people, he told them to give the first tenth of their income to him, whether it was money, produce or animals. See Leviticus 27:30. At that time most were farmers, and so they would give one tenth of their produce, and the same is true for many today who make their living from farming. However for those who receive a wage or salary, we give one tenth of what we receive.

In Malachi 3:7-12 God says that if we do not give the tenth then we are robbing him! It is as if we are cheating God, and if we do, we will no longer be under the blessing of God. In v10 it says, 'Bring the full amount of your tithes ... put me to the test and you will see that I will open the windows of heaven and pour out on you in abundance all kinds of good things.' It pays to be obedient!

The tithe is used to help support the work of the Lord, in the place where we receive our spiritual food. In the Old Testament the people gave their tithes to the priests, and we see a similar thing in the New Testament. When Jesus sent out the disciples to preach the gospel, he said they deserved to receive wages from those they went to. Matthew 10:10.

2. Offerings

An offering is different to a tithe. The tithe is one tenth of all we receive, and we are only giving back to God what already belongs to him. An offering is giving over and above the tithe, and is truly an expression of our love for God, as we are giving more than he requires.

In the Old Testament offerings were used to build the tabernacle, and then later, the temple. Exodus 35:29, 1 Chronicles 29:9. Today offerings can be used for church buildings, or for reaching the lost. Another purpose for offerings is to help those in need. The early Christians gave to help the poor as we see in Acts 4:34-35.

It's not always easy for new Christians to start giving tithes and offerings! However when we understand that all we have has already been given to us by God, it is easier to return what belongs to him. And remember too that he said to test him to see if his promises are true. You will discover they are, and not only that, you are storing up treasure in Heaven.