

# a guide to giving

*The aim of this paper is to provide some help in thinking wisely about how we invest our money through giving it away.<sup>1</sup>*



## the biblical foundations

### blessing

Our material possessions & our wealth are good gifts from God meant for his people to enjoy. God richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment (1Tim 6.17) However, we fall into error when we are too easily satisfied with too little blessing. Hence Jesus' encouragement to "provide purses for ourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted..." (Luke 12.33).

### idolatry

Tragically we often love the gifts more than the giver. Greed is idolatry and we should name it as the intolerable evil it is. "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs." (1Tim 6.10) Jesus warns us that wealth is deceitful. Greed is driven by fear. Hence we must dwell prayerfully in the scriptures on the faithfulness of the Lord. eg. Rom 8.28-39.

### contentment

Against those who would pursue merely financial blessing the apostle Paul writes, "But godliness with contentment is great gain" (1Tim 6.6). Paul had learnt "to be content whatever the circumstances" (Phil 4.11). The secret to such contentment is Jesus. In fact, whatever was once to his profit, Paul considered loss, "compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things" (Phil 3.7-8). Its important to note that Christian contentment is not making do with second best but rather the peace that flows from having all that you need, the very best, in Jesus (Heb 13.5-6). A proper understanding of the blessing we enjoy in Jesus, guards our hearts against idolatry and liberates us to be generous.

### generosity

Our attitude to our wealth should be shaped by the generosity of the Lord God toward us. "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich" (2Cor 8.9). The gospel of grace liberates us to be "open handed" with our wealth & possessions, especially to fellow believers. In fact, the genuineness of our faith can be tested by our care of the poor (James .27, 1Jn 3.16-18). God blesses the generous person so that they can be even more generous (2Cor 8-9). "Command those who are rich to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life" (1Tim 6.17-19).

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## how much?

In the New Testament we are given a formula to determine our generosity. It is not tithing. Under the old covenant people gave a tenth (a tithe) to the LORD. The new covenant alternative to tithing is the 2Cor 8.9 formula or the “Jesus formula”. That is, the generosity of Jesus is what should shape our generosity. Those who enjoy the grace of Jesus should excel in the grace of giving.

Jesus shaped generosity is not irresponsible. We are to give according to our means (2Cor 8.10-12) in line with our income (1Cor 16.2). So, the more money we have, the more generous we can be. The greater your income, the greater your percentage of giving can be.

So, consider your income. Consider your relational responsibilities. Consider the grace of Christ Jesus to you. Be generous.

## who?

We are to give generously to those who are in need (James 1.27).

We are to be especially generous to the family of believers (Gal 6.10, 1Jn 3.16-18, Acts 2.42-47, Acts 4.32-35), particularly those who labour in the Lord (1Timothy 5.17-18, Gal 6.6, 1Cor 9.1-14). That means in our giving we will give particular attention to our local church family & missionaries & mission organisations.

We should consider such generosity as wise investment in the eternal kingdom of God.

## how?

We give freely and not under compulsion for God loves a cheerful giver (2Cor 9.7).

We give boldly, for God is able to make all grace abound to us (2Cor 9.8, 11).

We give consistently, prayerfully & thoughtfully. Our giving should be budgeted (1Cor 16.2).

Our generosity should have first claim on our wealth (1Cor 16.1-2).

Direct debiting is often a wise course because it enables consistent prayerful, generous giving and it protects us from spending what we’ve decided to invest in the kingdom to come.

We should also look for opportunities to be spontaneously generous. A good generosity guideline is that we ought to be as generous to others as we are luxurious with ourselves.

In addition, consider what happens to your money & property beyond your death. Leaving money towards gospel ministry is a great way to continue growing followers of Jesus beyond your life time.

Talking & sharing with one another about giving is an important means by which God grows us in wise godly giving.

