

QUIET TIME

Theme: Biblical reasons to give

- Try to make a specific time every day to meet Jesus Christ through reading and meditating his Word.
- Pray, talk with Jesus Christ and make a few short notes about this Bible passage in your notebook.
- Record what you discover, what speaks to your mind and heart, what you find difficult or what you understood.

- Day 1 Matthew 6:1-4,19-21
Give inconspicuously, but where it counts
- Day 2 Matthew 10:8; 25:35-40
Give to insignificant brothers
- Day 3 2 Corinthians 8:1-9
The New Testament way of giving is not a fixed amount, but according to ability
- Day 4^{BS} 2 Corinthians 9:6-15
The New Testament way of giving is without compulsion
- Day 5 Luke 12:41-48
Give at the right time to people God entrusted to you what they really need in spiritual and material respect
- Day 6 Luke 16:1-9
Use what you have to make friends for eternity
- Day 7 Proverbs 19:17; 21:13; Matthew 5:42; 7:6
Give to the poor, but not to 'the dogs'
- Day 8 1 John 3:16-22
Give, because giving is loving with deeds instead of words
- Day 9 1 Corinthians 16:1-3
Give by weekly laying something aside
- Day 10 Acts 20:32-35
Give by working hard
- Think about Proverbs 30:8-9.
"Give me neither poverty nor riches,
but give me only my daily bread."
 - Pray every day for someone or something specific and wait in expectation for what God is going to do (Psalm 5:3).

STUDY

Theme: Giving

Read study 46 carefully before the next meeting. If you have questions, write them down and mail them to one of your group leaders. We will seek an answer together.

BIBLE STUDY

Theme: Whoever sows generously will also reap generously

If you like, you may already prepare the Bible Study for the coming meeting by reading through the Bible passage. Make use of the 5-step Bible Study method. The Bible passage is: **2 Corinthians 9:1-15**

MEMORISATION

1. Motivation

Jesus memorised Bible verses (Luke 4:4-13). Are you doing that?

2. Memorisation

Memorise this verse in the Bible version of your choice.

GIVING

2 Corinthians 9:6-7

Remember this:
Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly,
and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.
Each man should give
what he has decided in his heart to give,
not reluctantly or under compulsion,
for God loves a cheerful giver.

2 Corinthians 9:6-7(NIV)

3. Review and back-review

Review the last 5 memorised verses once every day and back-review all other memorised verses once every three weeks.

46. Giving

Must Christians give one tenth of their income (tithes)? Must they also give their gifts to their own congregation?

The Bible teaches that the giving of tithes was a part of the Old Testament ceremonial law. At his first coming, Jesus Christ fulfilled, cancelled and abrogated the ceremonial law.

GIVING DURING THE OLD TESTAMENT PERIOD

A. Giving of tithes

1. The giving of tithes was part of the Old Testament ceremonial law of Israel

The law was *added* to the covenant 645 years after Abraham (cf. lesson 9). The ceremonial law consisted of laws concerning holy people (priests and Levites), laws concerning holy places (tabernacle and temple of Jerusalem), laws concerning holy times (Sabbath, the religious festivals and fasting day of Israel) and laws concerning holy actions in Israel (circumcision, animal sacrifices, the first-born in the family, the first fruits of the harvest, the tithes from the possessions of animals and the harvests, clean foods and ablutions). The tithes were used for worshipping God in the temple in Jerusalem, for supporting the Aaronitic priesthood (Numbers 18:21,23b-24,26,28) and for supporting the poor in Israel (Deuteronomy 14:2-29).

2. The meaning of giving tithes in the Old Testament period

The tithes belonged to God. The tithes were 'holy to the LORD', that is, they were set aside for the service of the LORD (Leviticus 27:30). The holy land of Israel belonged to the LORD. The Israelites did NOT own the land; they were aliens and God's tenants, God's guests in the land (Leviticus 25:23)! The Israelites were allowed to use the land as well as its God-given riches. Therefore the tithes were a kind of 'rent or tax' which the tenants (the Israelites) had to pay to the Owner (God) for making use of his land (Israel)! The tithes were an offering (a levy or tax on the Israelites) that had to be given to the Levites as their inheritance in the land of Israel and as compensation for their work in the tabernacle (temple) in Israel (Numbers 18:23-24).

The tithes are only concerned with the religion of Israel and only during the Old Testament period! During the New Testament period the tithes remained in force (Matthew 23:23-24; Luke 18:12) only until the death of Jesus Christ on the cross made an end to the ceremonial law (Matthew 5:17; Ephesians 2:14-15, Colossians 2:14) and an end to the religion of Israel (Matthew 27:51; cf. John 2:19-20; 4:23-24)!

3. The destination of the tithes in the Old Testament period

Malachi 3:6-12 was God's command for Israel (Malachi 1:1) and NOT for the Christian Church! The tithes were destined for the temple in Jerusalem (Malachi 3:10) and the blessing for bringing tithes to the temple was for the land of Israel (Malachi 3:10-12). God demanded from the people of Israel to give tithes – not just one tithe, but *at least* two tithes (one fifth) of their possessions and harvest every year!

The first tithe (Leviticus 27:30-32; Numbers 18:21-32) was a holy offering (Numbers 18:32), the reward or compensation (salary) for the ceremonial service of the Levites in the tabernacle and temple (Numbers 18:31).

The second tithe (Deuteronomy 12:4-7,11-12,17-19; 14:22-27) was destined for the feast of rejoicing in the presence of the LORD at the place God chose as a dwelling for his Name (the temple at Jerusalem). This was a part of worshipping God. Every two consecutive years the second tithe was used to buy food in Jerusalem to consume at this feast of rejoicing. This probably took place during the yearly Feast of Tabernacles (Exodus 23:17; Leviticus 23:33-43; Numbers 29:12-39; Deuteronomy 16:13-17). These tithes served to teach the Israelites again and again to stand in awe before God.

The third tithe (Deuteronomy 14:28-29; 26:12-15) was destined for the poor and the aliens living among the Israelites in their own towns. This 'tithe of the third year' is probably the same as the second tithe used for the feast of rejoicing (Deuteronomy 14:22-27), but every third year it was instead used to support the poor and the aliens in their own towns (thus, a kind of social tax).

4. The contents of the tithes

The contents of the tithes varied throughout the Old Testament revelation. According to some parts in the Old Testament the tithes consisted of the wine and oil (Numbers 18:27-30; Nehemiah 10:37; 13:12). But according to other parts in the Old Testament the tithes consisted of a tenth of the harvest on their fields, a tenth of the fruit from their trees and a tenth of the domestic animals in their possession (Leviticus 27:30-32; Deuteronomy 14:22-23), even a tenth of honey (2 Chronicles 31:5-6).

GIVING DURING THE NEW TESTAMENT PERIOD

B. Giving of tithes is no longer prescribed

The ceremonial law served as God's prerequisite for approaching God in worship and service in Israel during the Old Testament period. These laws only applied as long as the first tabernacle (temple) was still standing (Hebrews 9:8-10)! These external regulations were only 'the shadow' of the reality that came with Jesus Christ in the New Testament period (Colossians 2:16-17; Hebrews 8:5; 10:1). When the New Testament order came, the law changed (Hebrews 7:12) (cf. study 9)! The law was fulfilled (Matthew 5:17) and consequently cancelled (Colossians 2:14) and abrogated (Ephesians 2:14-15)!

Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament law (Matthew 5:17): he gave the moral law its complete meaning (Matthew 5:17-48), but maintained the moral law (Matthew 22:36-40; cf. Romans 13:8-10). He also fulfilled the types and shadows of the ceremonial law and thereby cancelled and abrogated them (Colossians 2:14; Ephesians 2:15). Thus the giving of tithes to the Old Testament priesthood, the Old Testament worship in the temple at Jerusalem and the Old Testament care for the poor and aliens in Israel has been cancelled and abrogated and has been replaced by the New Testament way of giving and caring.

The Old Testament requirement of bringing animal sacrifices may not be re-introduced into the New Testament Church. Likewise the giving of tithes may NOT be re-introduced into the New Testament Church! The giving of tithes is NOT required of Christians!

C. The principles of giving in the New Testament revelation

The New Testament principles of giving are taught in Mark 12:41-44; Luke 6:38; 1 Corinthians 16:2 and 2 Corinthians 8:1-9:15. (*Read this last passage.*)

1st Principle: Giving is investing in God's kingdom

2 Corinthians 9:6 says, "Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously." Giving away is not the same as throwing away. What you give as a Christian, never goes lost, but multiplies!

Giving is like sowing seed. The seed is tiny and looks worthless, but inside every seed is hidden an enormous potential! The seed contains the potential to life and multiplication! In order to allow the seed to grow and bear fruit, the gardener must first cast it into the soil and the seed must die (John 12:24). He must cast it away, before he may expect something in return. It is as the seed of a tree that grows into a tree and bears fruit

that contains many seeds. Likewise your gift must first be given away before it can bear fruit and multiply many times!

2nd Principle: Give from what you have received

2 Corinthians 9:10 says, "Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness."

You can only give what you have. And everything you have you have received from God. "What do you have that you did not receive? And if you received it, why do you boast as though you did not?" (1 Corinthians 4:7). It is God who gives the seed that you sow as a Christian. What you sow, you first received from God. Therefore 'giving' is not the result of the goodness of the Christian, but is the result of God's grace! God gives you the seed to sow and he also multiplies it!

3rd Principle: Give according to your means

2 Corinthians 8:12-13 says. "For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have. Our desire is not that others (the receivers) might be relieved while you (the giver) are hard pressed, but that there might be equality."

In the kingdom of God there must be a balance between giving and receiving.

4th Principle: Give abundantly, even sacrificially

2 Corinthians 8:3 relates that the congregations in Macedonia gave as much as they were able and even beyond their ability!

Christians will harvest what they sow (2 Corinthians 9:6; Galatians 6:7). This rule does not only apply to agriculture, but also to the moral, spiritual and financial world. Whoever gives little, receives little. And whoever gives much, receives much (Luke 6:38). This principle was already known in the Old Testament. Proverbs 11:24-25 says, "One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed." Proverbs 19:17 says, "He who is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will reward him for what he has done."

Jesus taught that a simple act of giving a glass of cold water to someone would be rewarded (Matthew 10:42). He also taught that giving food to the hungry and drink to the thirsty is equal to giving to Jesus Christ! Whoever gives a bed to a stranger to sleep and clothes to the poor, gives these things to Jesus Christ. And whoever cares for the sick or visits the prisoner does these things to Jesus Christ (Matthew 25:35-40). Therefore, sow abundantly, because you will harvest abundantly!

5th Principle: Give cheerfully, not reluctantly or under compulsion

2 Corinthians 9:7 says, “Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” Giving during the Old Testament period was NOT free at all! It was compulsory and also the amount that had to be given was pre-determined (Malachi 3:6-12).

But the first coming of Jesus Christ fulfilled, cancelled and abrogated the ceremonial law of the Old Testament. Giving in the New Testament period has become completely voluntarily! The elders of a congregation may not enforce giving and also may not enforce the giving of a certain amount (e.g. tithes)! They may also not demand that these gifts be given to their congregation alone, or worse, to them as leader alone!

The New Testament teaches that every believer is completely free to make a decision with God in his heart to give, how much to give and to whom to give. By way of speaking, the poor Christian may choose to give less than a tenth of their income, while the rich Christian may choose to give more than a tenth. Every Christian may choose to give any amount to any or to some of the people the Bible teaches Christians to give to.

The attitude with which a Christian gives is more important than the amount he gives! A Christian may not give under compulsion (of the Church or its leaders) or reluctantly. They must give wholeheartedly and cheerfully.

6th Principle: Give regularly and systematically

1 Corinthians 16:2 says, “On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.” The Christians in the Corinthian congregation were urged to set aside some money every week as gifts to God.

Every Christian should set aside the money he decided to give on a regularly basis and then give it to the goals God determined in the Bible (cf. E).

D. The blessings of giving

1. You will have sufficient for your own needs

2 Corinthians 9:8 says, “God is able to make all grace abound to you so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.”

The people in the world think that it is foolish to give your money away to God’s work. They regard this as a bad investment.

But the people in the world do not know the God of the Bible or his ability to multiply the little one gives as well as the little one possesses! God’s grace always leads to increase and never to decrease, even when Christians give away very much! After the Christian has given away money (and time, energy, etc.) he will discover that sufficient is left for his own needs and use!

2. You will do many good works

2 Corinthians 9:8 also says that the Christian who gives will abound in every good work. When a Christian gives he discovers that he also becomes rich in good works.

2 Corinthians 9:9 says, “He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor, his righteousness endures forever.” God makes a Christian who gives rich in righteousness (good works).

3. You will be generous

2 Corinthians 9:11 says that the Christian who gives will be made rich in every way so that he can be generous on every occasion. Some people thought that Paul here taught the so-called ‘prosperity gospel’, namely, that a Christian who gives much money to God would receive much more money from God! But the context (verse 8-10) does not refer to material and outward riches, but rather to spiritual and inner riches. When a Christian gives (money, time, energy, etc.), he does not automatically become rich in a material sense. He will, however, have sufficient for his own material needs (verse 8; cf. Matthew 6:25-34). The Christian who gives is the Christian who lives! He learns to give more and more of himself, his time and energy, his talents and material possessions to God and his kingdom. He continues to give because he has tasted the abundant and overflowing grace of God in his own life.

4. Other people will start praying to God

2 Corinthians 9:11-14 says that the people who receive the gifts will begin to pray and thank God. They will also pray for the giver. 1 Corinthians 12:24-26 teaches that God has combined the members in his Body (the Church) in such a way that there would not be division in the Body and that the members would have equal concern for each other. If one member suffers, all members suffer together. What happens to the Church in one part of the world (e.g. a flood, a drought, a famine, a disaster, oppression, persecution, etc.) influences the Church in the whole world. The members of the local congregation do not form the whole worldwide Body and may not behave as if they are the whole Church! All the congregations in the world together form the one Body of Jesus Christ (John 10:16)! That is why Christians in every congregation should occupy themselves with what happens to their fellow brothers and sisters elsewhere in the world! That is why Jesus Christ prays that all believers in him may be one so that the whole world may believe that God had sent Jesus Christ (John 17:20-21).

5. Other people will start thanking God

2 Corinthians 9:15 says, “Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!” God has given his one and only Son as a sacrifice of atonement for our sins. By giving Jesus Christ, God gave everything (Romans 8:32)! What God gave surpasses everything Christians can give or actually give! God did not give us ‘something’, but he gave us himself in Jesus Christ! God gave us nothing less than the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ! He gave us his Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9-10)! He gave us all the spiritual blessings in heaven (Ephesians 1:3). He gave us eternal life, that is, that we may know him personally and may live with him forever in complete perfection! Thus, when a Christian gives, he gives because he is thankful for the indescribable gift of Jesus Christ which God gave to him.

E. To whom should Christians give?

1. Give to people who teach you

1 Corinthians 9:14 and Galatians 6:6 teach that Christians ought to give to people who preach the gospel to them and teach the Bible to them, even if these people do not belong to their own congregation.

2. Give to people who lead you

1 Timothy 5:17-18 teaches that Christians ought to give to the elders of their congregation who do their ministry well and are in need of support. The elders (called ‘shepherds’ = pastors and ‘overseers’ = bishops) of the congregation may *not demand* support from the members. And the members of the congregation may *not neglect* to support these elders. Both the elders that are supported and the members that support must learn to trust in God for their needs (Matthew 6:25-34).

3. Give to people involved in God’s ministry elsewhere

Philippians 4:14-18 and 3 John 5-8 teach that Christians ought to consider support of missionaries and travelling evangelists, even when these people do not belong to their own congregation.

4. Give to Christians who are in need

James 2:15-17, 1 John 3:17-18 and 2 Corinthians 8:7-15 teach that Christians ought to support fellow-Christians who need their support, like widows, orphans, the handicapped and those in severe trouble. Christians ought to give support to poor and struggling congregations in other parts of the world.

5. Give to the poor in general

Proverbs 19:17; 21:13 and Matthew 6:1-4 teach that Christians ought to give to non-Christians that need their help.

F. How much should Christians give?

1. Give in proportion to your income

Christians must set aside money on a regular basis in order to give away (1 Corinthians 16:2). They must give in accordance to their income or in accordance to what they can give (2 Corinthians 8:12).

2. Give abundantly

Christians must make a deliberate decision beforehand in their heart and together with God to whom they will give and how much they will give (2 Corinthians 9:6-7). The receiver and the amount are personal matters between God and the giver. No one may force a Christian to give to a particular church, to a particular person or to give a particular amount.

Nevertheless, the New Testament urges Christians to give abundantly and even sacrificially!