



Why Give to the Church?

2 Cor. 8:7-9

We are in the middle of our Spiritual Growth Emphasis. Today we are handing out these Commitment Cards. Let's go over them...

Today we're going to talk about the last one on the list - giving generously to God.

Check out this statement: "*All churches ever talk about is money!*" That's what some people think, and I suppose that some churches present themselves as little more than perpetual fund-raising machines.

Nevertheless, today I want to share the **biblical reasons that Christians should give to their local church.**

I. GIVING SHOWS LOVE AND GRATITUDE FOR JESUS CHRIST

2 Corinthians 8:7-9 ⁷But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.

⁸I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others.

⁹For 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.

If you are a Christian, the main reason you should give to the church

is that you love Jesus Christ and are grateful for what He has done for you.

This was the motivation from which Paul wanted the Corinthian Christians to give. Note that Paul was testing the "*sincerity of [their] love*" by their giving. Their love for whom? Their love for Christ. This, above all else, was to be the reason they brought their money to church for this offering.

But note also that he reminds them of how Jesus, **FIRST LOVED THEM.** Though He was rich, He became poor (by coming to earth and dying) so they could become rich! In short, *give out of gratitude*, because Jesus loved you first.

Of course, God has inspired and preserved Paul's words, not only for those Corinthian Christians but for us as well. The motivation for giving should be the same for us as it was for them. We, too, should give because of our love for Jesus Christ and because of our gratitude for His giving us immeasurable riches we never could have acquired on our own!

Recently I got behind a car with a license plate that read "Disabled Veteran." That identification allows the driver certain privileges because of what he suffered on behalf of others. Imagine a government official who resents those privileges and who foolishly proposes a law that revokes them. Long lines of opposition would argue, "These disabled veterans are people we asked to go and fight for us. They went willingly and sacrificed a great deal on our behalf. Because of what they did for us then, it is our responsibility to give on their behalf now."

We should give to Christ through His church for the same reasons. Remembering what He has done for us—what and where we would be without Him.

Think of that, and nothing else, for a mere two minutes and I'm confident that, if you are a Christian, the Holy Spirit will help you overcome any reluctance to give to Jesus' church.

II. THE CHURCH IS THE ONLY ORGANIZATION JESUS SAID HE WOULD BUILD

In Matthew 16:18 Jesus said to His disciples, *"I will build My church."* The church belongs to Him, for when He calls it **"My church"** He acknowledges His ownership. And not only does the church as a whole belong to Christ, but every local expression of it belongs to Him as well. So when you give to the church you attend, you are giving to what Jesus owns and you are building what He builds. To think of it another way, you are giving to Jesus to help Him build His church.

I happen to believe, and I am convinced it is from God's Word, that the church is the Hope of this World. Now I realize that in some ways reality doesn't back that up (there is a weakness to the church today - there is a lost focus, there is sin and corruption) - nevertheless, since Jesus Christ is the hope of the world, and the church is entrusted with the only message that can impact a person's eternal destiny there is nothing more important than the Church of Jesus Christ!

I believe we have not yet seen what God can do through FBCM if we take seriously our calling to serve him wholeheartedly...including giving to his work as we should. We have established goals and three main areas, I believe are entirely biblical. Evangelism-to reach more people in the FBCM area, Discipleship - maturing our believers; and Community Penetration - bringing the knowledge and love of Christ to those around us who need it.

That is what I give to the church for more. Not just to pay the bills, but to extend the kingdom and resource the hope of the world.

Theologian RC Sproul many years ago and asked Bill Hybels how much ministry he thought he could do with 100 bucks. *"I assumed he was hoping for some deep theological response, but before I could think of one he answered the question himself. "You can do about \$100 worth"* He was making the point that a fruitful ministry requires resources, and you can be as theological as you want to be, but the church will never reach her full redemptive potential until adequate financial resources flow in her direction.

If we gave to the church, so that we not just paid the bills, but invested in Kingdom work, we could have a tremendous impact.

If you love Jesus, you will want to give to support what He is doing in the world. And what is He doing? He is doing what He said He would do "He is building his church."

III. GIVING HELPS FULFILL THE GREAT COMMISSION

Before He ascended to heaven, Jesus said **Matthew 28:19-20**, *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age".*

You can't individually go to all nations, but others are willing to go on your behalf. That's what his church does.

Last week we were blessed by two of the thousands of missionaries we support, Ryan and Kristin? Today we as a church will help another, Sue Menick, to go. I feel proud to be able to have a part in putting people like them with the passion and love of Jesus in our world that needs Christ, aren't you?

When you give to your church, your church takes a portion of your gift and uses it to send and support those who will go to other places and make disciples for Christ.

IV. GIVING IS A FORM OF WORSHIP

When the church at Philippi collected money for the furtherance of Paul's ministry, he described their giving in **Philippians 4:18** as *"a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God"*. He says to them in effect, *"What you gave to me through your church was, like the placing of a sacrificial lamb on an altar in the Old Testament, an act of worship to God."*

Giving to God is preeminently an act of worship, It ought then to be a focal point of thanksgiving and self-dedication in weekly worship."

It is an expression of devotion to God. In fact, we call it an *offering* because it is a gift we offer to God, and giving to God is worship.

So when you give, you might want to utter a brief, silent prayer such as "Thank You, Lord," or "I love You, Lord," or "Father, this represents all of me."

V. GIVING IS A FORM OF FELLOWSHIP

Giving to the church is not only an expression of worship to God, but also of fellowship with His

people. In the church, *shared giving* is a part of shared life.

No church modeled this better than that church full of new Christians in the beginning of the book of Acts. They proved that their heart and soul were in their new community by their giving to the community: **Acts 4:32** *"Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common"*.

The Greek word translated here as *in common* is formed from the same root as *koinonia*, the word for fellowship. Although similar, this word (*koinon*) has more of a *financial emphasis* to it than *koinonia*. It was used to refer to a joint pool of funds or a shared account.

Some who misunderstand life in the early church have thought that I his verse speaks of a form of communism. Not so. The attitude in communism is *"What's yours is mine,"* but the attitude of these Christians was *"What's mine is yours."* They shared materially and financially with the church because they shared a supernatural life with the church.

We ought to be aware of giving to each other when we give to the church. As we give together we provide things such as classrooms, utilities, literature, equipment, and supplies that are used by each other for the work of the church. Our giving enables ministries of the church that strengthen us in return. We are the church of Christ, and when we give to the church we are giving to each other as well as to Him.

We ought also to feel a sense of Christian community in giving to our church because we share together in the work of Christ's kingdom. Through giving we unite do evangelism and missions, to build up believers, to feed the hungry, to meet the practical needs of hurting people. These things are the mutual responsibility of the church body. How could anyone not want to be part of doing that?

VI. GIVING TESTIFIES OF A CHANGED LIFE AND A CONCERN FOR OTHERS

One other thought about giving in congregational worship: Giving to the church testifies to the church,

to unconverted attenders, and to your family of your love for God.

When you give to God it is a physical testimony that He matters in your life. When you give sacrificially it expresses your conviction that God matters to you and shouldn't matter to those around you.

On the contrary, if outsiders happen to notice that some of those who lead in worship, or those who are evidently pillars of the church, don't give, wouldn't they say to themselves, "There must be something very wrong with the church if people, including the leaders, don't give?" When we do give, we become living testimonies that God is worthy of worship and that His church is worthy of support.

VII. WE SHOULD USE GOD'S MONEY FOR GOD'S WORK AND GOD'S GLORY

I know that is what I am already talking about, but I want to make just one point here.

Don't fall for the myth of "my" money. Who owns what you earn, spend, and keep? God does. God owns you and everything you call, "mine." *"The earth is the Lord's, and all it contains,"* declares **Psalm 24:1**, *"the world, and those who dwell in it"*. The Lord explicitly announces in **Psalm 50:10**, *"For every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills"*. Furthermore, *"Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's"* (Romans 14:8), and *"Do you not know that . . . you are not your own? For you were bought at a price"* (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

Your goods are God's. Your money is His. Even though He allows you to earn an income so you can buy the things you need and to provide for your family, it's all God's.

Giving to God's church reminds us that our Creator permanently owns us and all we temporarily have, including our money. This helps us acknowledge that our Provider and Sustainer gives us the jobs by which we earn our money and the health to work in those jobs (Deuteronomy 8:17 18). Giving is the most direct way of acknowledging God's ownership.

VIII. GOD PROMISES GENEROUS BLESSINGS FOR GENEROUS GIVERS

You may be familiar with the passage from **Malachi 3:10** where God says,

"Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and prove Me now in this," says the Lord of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it."

A New Testament promise of favor upon those who give unsparingly to the work of God is in **2 Corinthians 9:6-8**,

But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.

These verses do not teach a prosperity theology, that is, that God wants every Christian to have earthly riches and that giving to God is a Christian's way of getting wealth on earth. Gene Getz points out, *"Nowhere in Scripture are Christians taught to give in order to gain earthly abundance."*

But a biblical case can be made regarding the generous blessing of God both for our needs in this life and our eternal joy in the next if we are generous and rightly motivated in giving to His work. Reread what the passages do say, and remember that these remarkable words are nothing less than the unfailing promise of God Himself. Do you really believe what He says about blessing the person *"who sows bountifully"*? How could anyone believe these texts and not give generously to God through His church?

One MORE APPLICATION ABOUT GIVING

Well, there you are. Eight reasons God gives us to give and to give generously. Now that you are convinced of the importance of giving to the church,

I was going to share some principles on how to give, but instead I have put them on the backside of the handout that you have.

Instead, let me remind you once again of Why we give. It's because through it, Jesus changes lives. Jesus has changed our lives and he has plans to change others too.

Listen and watch.

(Play Video ...)

But giving to the church is of no eternal benefit to you unless you have first given yourself to the Lord.

You can't buy God's favor. No amount of money, whether given at one time or over a lifetime, can purchase a ticket to heaven. Until a person comes to Christ-whose death bought pardon for sins-giving to the church brings no gain at the Judgment or beyond. And after a person has turned from living for himself and given his life to Jesus Christ, then we give out of love.

Have you given yourself to the Lord? If so, do you give to His church like one who is His?