

The HEART of Giving

I believe what is most important in giving is our heart. God is not necessarily interested in obeying the 10% tithe mandate; He is interested in our love for Him and His people, His church, His purposes.

Hosea 6:6 & Matthew 12:7 “for I desire mercy and not sacrifice”.
NLT: “I want you to show love, not offer sacrifices.”

Offering sacrifices comes out of obligation; God wants us to love Him from our hearts. Don't we know exactly how this feels? Who wants someone to do something nice for them because the other person “has to”? We want it to come from the heart, not out of obligation. Certainly God wants our hearts also.

Luke 15:16 And He said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.

2 Corinthians 9: 6 But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 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. 9 As it is written: "He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever."* 10 Now may* He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness, 11 while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God. 12 For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God, 13 while, through the proof of this ministry, they glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal sharing with them and all men, 14 and by their prayer for you, who long for you because of the exceeding grace of God in you. 15 Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

EX: Cain and Able (Genesis 4). I believe Cain gave according to what he “had to”, yet God was pleased with Able's offering because Able gave God his best and it came from his heart – not from obedience, but because He loved Him.

Haven't we all been guilty of asking the following questions: “do I HAVE to tithe on gross or net income?” “do I HAVE to tithe on my tax return?” “do I HAVE to tithe on this birthday money?” “do I HAVE to tithe on this bonus?” What we are basically asking is: “what is the bare minimum I can get by with?” Sounds like the heart of Cain! Instead our hearts should say, “what am I “ABLE” to give to God?!?!”

Haggai 1: 3 Then the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet, saying, 4 "Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?" 5 Now therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts: "Consider your ways! 6 "You have sown much, and bring in little; You eat, but do not have enough; You drink, but you are not filled with drink; You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; And he who earns wages, Earns wages to put into a bag with holes." 7 Thus says the Lord of hosts: "Consider your ways! 8 Go up to the mountains and bring wood and build the temple, that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified," says the Lord. 9 "You looked for much, but indeed it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why?" says the Lord of hosts. "Because of My house that is in ruins, while every one of you runs to his own house. 10 Therefore the heavens above you withhold the dew, and the earth withholds its fruit. 11 For I called for a drought on the land and the mountains, on the grain and the new wine and the oil, on whatever the ground brings forth, on men and livestock, and on all the labor of your hands."

These people were more interested in their own homes than they were the Lord's home. Putting our focus merely on selfish desires is like putting all our money "into a bag with holes"... what a good analogy. When we give to God, He can prosper us much more than hoarding money for ourselves. Likewise, selfish living can cause us to wonder where all our money is disappearing to... we seem to never get ahead, never have enough. God controls the fruit of our labor and finances.

Psalm 127:1 Unless the Lord builds the house, They labor in vain who build it

Philippians 4: 10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity. 11 Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: 12 I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. 13 I can do all things through Christ F8 who strengthens me. 14 **Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress.** 15 Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, **no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only.** 16 For even in Thessalonica **you sent aid once and again for my necessities.** 17 **Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account.** 18 Indeed I have all and abound. **I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God.** 19 **And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.**

Well, we have certainly heard Phil 4:19 quoted frequently, right? And of course, it is a great promise that we want to claim for our lives, BUT there's an "AND" preceding the promise... this promise is not for everyone, it was made to THIS church because of their giving. So we CAN claim this reward IF we too are extravagantly giving out of a pure heart.

Mark 14:3 And being in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at the table, a woman came having an alabaster flask of very costly oil of spikenard. Then she broke the flask and poured it on His head. 4 But there were some who were indignant among themselves, and said, "Why was this fragrant oil wasted? 5 For it might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor." And they criticized her sharply. 6 But Jesus said, "Let her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a good work for Me. 7 For you have the poor with you always, and whenever you wish you may do them good; but Me you do not have always. 8 **She has done what she could.** She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial. 9 Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her."

Here we see Jesus isn't caught up in percentages and rules, but she gave out of her heart and did what she could for the Lord.

Luke 21:3-4 So He said, "Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all; for all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God, but she out of her poverty put in all the livelihood that she had."

EXAMPLE: The Good Samaritan

Everyone knows this story so I won't insert it here, but the moral of the story is that we are to go 'above and beyond' giving God back His 10% tithe. We are called to give to whoever is in need that comes across our path. More below...

Matthew 25:31 "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. 32 All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. 33 And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. 34 Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; 36 I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.' 37 Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? 38 When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? 39 Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' 40 And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.' 41 Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: 42 for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; 43 I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.' 44 Then they also will answer Him, F141 saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?' 45 Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.' 46 And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

God knows our motives!!! We are supposed to want what is good for His kingdom, not for selfish purposes, this has to include what we do with HIS money!!!

James 4:2 You want what you don't have, so you scheme and kill to get it. You are jealous for what others have, and you can't possess it, so you fight and quarrel to take it away from them. And yet the reason you don't have what you want is that you don't ask God for it. **3 And even when you do ask, you don't get it because your whole motive is wrong ? you want only what will give you pleasure.** **4** You adulterers! Don't you realize that friendship with this world makes you an enemy of God? I say it again, that **if your aim is to enjoy this world, you can't be a friend of God.** **5** What do you think the Scriptures mean when they say that the Holy Spirit, whom God has placed within us, jealously longs for us to be faithful? **6** He gives us more and more strength to stand against such evil desires. As the Scriptures say, "God sets himself against the proud, but he shows favor to the humble." **7** So humble yourselves before God. Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you. **8** Draw close to God, and God will draw close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, you hypocrites. **9** Let there be tears for the wrong things you have done. Let there be sorrow and deep grief. Let there be sadness instead of laughter, and gloom instead of joy. **10** When you bow down before the Lord and admit your dependence on him, he will lift you up and give you honor.

Matthew 6: **19** "Don't store up treasures here on earth, where they can be eaten by moths and get rusty, and where thieves break in and steal. **20** Store your treasures in heaven, where they will never become moth-eaten or rusty and where they will be safe from thieves. **21 Wherever your treasure is, there your heart and thoughts will also be.**

Mark 12:30 You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.

If we love the Lord with everything that we have (our heart, soul, mind and strength), that would certainly show in how and where we spend not only our money, but our time and talents as well.

Mark 7:6 He answered and said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me.

The Pharisees gave their 10% and followed all the laws, but Jesus is interested in our hearts. He doesn't want religion; He doesn't seek only obedience, He wants a RELATIONSHIP with us and when we love someone, we will invest ourselves into them and it is by our LOVE for Christ that we will follow His commandments, not out of obligation!

1 John 5:2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments.

A HIGHER Standard

We are held to a higher standard than we were under the Law of the O.T.

Matthew 5: **17** "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. **18** For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one

not one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. 19 Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

21 "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, ^{F18} and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' 22 **But I say to you** that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause ^{F19} shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire. 23 Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. 25 Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. 26 Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny.

27 "You have heard that it was said to those of old, ^{F20} 'You shall not commit adultery.' ^{F21} 28 **But I say to you** that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 29 If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. 30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. 31 "Furthermore it has been said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' 32 **But I say to you** that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality ^{F22} causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.

33 "Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.' 34 **But I say to you**, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; 35 nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. 36 Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. 37 But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.

38 "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' ^{F23} 39 **But I tell you** not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. 40 If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. 41 And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. 42 **Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.**

43 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor ^{F24} and hate your enemy.' 44 **But I say to you**, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, ^{F25} 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. 46 For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? 47 And if you greet your brethren ^{F26} only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors ^{F27} do so? 48 Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

Matthew 13: 44 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. 45 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, 46 who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

Once we truly know the JOY of knowing the Lord, we will put EVERYTHING we have into His kingdom. No other “investment” should mean more to us.

Acts 2:44-47 Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

Acts 4:33-37 And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need. And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

1 Timothy 5:8 But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

Closing Thoughts...

I think of tithing as like when Jesus asked, “If you love those who love you, what reward will you have?” Tithing is something we should just do without expecting a return from God but because we are just giving God MERELY a tenth of ALL He has given us. If we tithe to get something in return, we are missing the point!!! Sadly I read a statistic that said in 2002 only 6% of Christian adults tithed. Our hearts are in such bad shape! We need to fall in love with the Lord. We need a heart adjustment more than anything. I don't think there is much reward in store --- even for us 6% that tithe. God is looking for those who have the hearts to do MORE than what is “expected” because they have God's love and His heart in operation. I am sitting on my couch right now looking around at my beautiful house, filled with lots of things and I know that on judgment day, none of this will matter. It will all be gone. God will ask me what I did with the \$XXXXXXX HE entrusted to me and what I have to show for it. I don't think I will be able to brag much about the house I lived in and all the “stuff” I accumulated for myself. I would hope that I would be able to say, “Lord, whenever I saw someone in need, I did my best to help them. I looked for ways to be a blessing to those in need. I saw “the least” hungry and gave them food, I visited and blessed those in prison, I visited the sick, I took care of our widows and orphans, I gave out of a cheerful and loving and thankful heart for all you have done for me.” I am GLAD we did this study. I feel even MORE convinced that ALL that we have is the LORD's and we will be accountable for how we use and invest it. Yet I don't feel burdened by this at all, I feel more compassion and love in my heart for others and a greater desire to give more. Thank you Lord for showing me Your heart and for the “love of God that is shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Spirit”! (Romans 5:5)