

Does My Giving Really Matter to God?

Introduction:

1. As a pastor, I regularly get questions from people about the subject of giving. It is a subject that has been very misused and abused by religious leaders. People are confused.
2. I'm sure all of you have channel-surfed, and have seen religious TV programming, and have witnessed the different methods employed in an effort to extract money from listeners.
3. Many people have been guilt-tripped into giving, some have been scared into giving, and others have been tricked into giving by being given big promises if they give.
4. This is all very sad and disillusioning to many people. It really is a shame, because giving should be one of the supreme delights of a child of God. Giving is a way for you to express your love for your Savior, your God.
5. It shouldn't be viewed as drudgery, or a duty, or a down payment to earn God's blessings. It should be viewed as a delight. Example: 1 Chronicles 29:9
6. Is giving to God something that is normal for a believer? As we study the Word of God, do you know what we find? Giving is the natural and normal response of a person that loves God.
7. This is why our giving **does** matter to God. It isn't because God is dependent on our resources. It is because our giving reflects the love in our heart for God, and that is very special to God. God desires to have us truly love Him.
2 Corinthians 8:7-8
 - Our giving matters to God because we matter to God. He cares about our relationship with Him.
8. This is true throughout God's Word, as we will learn this morning.

Giving before the Law of Moses

1. We know that during the time of Israel's law, giving was actually written into the law, and mandated. But, what about before God's written law?
2. Turn to Genesis 8:20-21. The first thing Noah did after he left the ark was to build an altar, and he made an offering unto the Lord. Of course, there was no money at that time, so this was Noah's way of giving to the Lord. Instead of keeping all the animals for himself and for his family for food, He gave to God, and trusted God.
 - Did Noah's giving matter to God? Was it a big deal to God? Look at verse 21. It so moved the heart of God, that God made a promise to never send a catastrophic judgment like the flood ever again.
3. Turn to Genesis 14:17-20. Abraham came against some wicked kings who had taken captive some of Abraham's family. When Abraham returned from war, he was met by the kingly priest Melchizedek (God's representative on earth), and notice that Abraham gave him a tithe from all his spoils of war. "Tithe" simply means "a tenth."

- Did God notice Abraham's giving? It is noted and remembered thousands of years later by God in the New Testament in Hebrews 7.
- Even before there was any written Word, there was something in the heart of believers - like Noah and Abraham - that knew and wanted to give to God. Their giving mattered to God. God didn't take it lightly.

Giving during the Law of Moses

1. The first Scripture from God ever to be written down was called the Law of Moses. This was a covenant between God and His people, Israel. It consisted of numerous laws and regulations, many of which dealt with the area of giving.
 - Deuteronomy 14:22 – annually, 10% of all their income produced went to God (tithe).
 - Deuteronomy 14:27 – another 10% went to the Levites for their livelihood, and to keep and maintain the temple.
 - Deuteronomy 14:28 – every third year, another 10% went towards a type of social welfare program for the poor and afflicted.
2. Again, we ask, did Israel's giving matter to God? Did He care if they did it or didn't do it? Let's read Malachi 3:7-9. Would you say it mattered to God? God knew they loved their possessions more than they loved Him, and it bothered God, otherwise He wouldn't have said anything.

Giving during Christ's earthly ministry

1. Jesus came to the lost sheep of Israel. He came to call them to repentance for their cold and callous hearts, that we saw evidenced through their lack of giving in Malachi.
2. Jesus knew that the people were materialistic, and in love with earthly treasure. Thus, He charged them in Matthew 6:19-21 to lay aside their materialistic attitudes and turn their hearts to God. He said, "*Ye cannot serve God and mammon.*"
3. Peter was a small-business owner who ran a commercial fishing business. When Christ called him, he shut it down, left his nets and equipment, and followed Christ. He gave all to the Lord! Did his giving matter to Christ? Read Luke 18:28-30
4. Turn to Mark 12:41-44. Did this poor widow's giving matter to Christ? It truly touched His heart because she **sacrificed** in order to give to God.

Giving in the dispensation of grace

1. Today, we are not living under the Old Testament law system. Romans 6:14 declares, "*...for ye are not under the law, but under grace.*" We are not under a law-based, performance system. We are saved by grace, kept by grace, and live by grace.
2. So how should God's grace cause a believer today to respond to His Lord and Savior?

3. Giving is the natural and normal response of a person that has experienced God's amazing grace. Like Noah and Abraham - before there ever was a written law - we give because we are so thankful for what God has done in our lives.
4. Does our giving matter to God today? Is God deeply interested in our giving? Does He notice when we make sacrifices and give? Let's read Philippians 4:15-16, 18.
 - Here, we read that their giving was like a sweet smell to God, and Paul says that their giving was "...*wellpleasing to God.*"
 - Again, their giving caused God to give them a promise. vs. 19
5. Did you notice some common denominators in each time period we looked at?
 - True believers have always had a desire to give to God.
 - Their giving was noticed by God, and either brought commendation or rebuke.
6. Today we sought to answer the question, "Does my giving really matter to God?" What do you think is the biblical answer? Absolutely, it matters! Why? It matters because it reveals our heart to God. It demonstrates how much we truly love the Lord.

Does the Place of My Giving Matter to God?

Introduction:

1. Last week, we answered the question, “Does my giving really matter to God?” We looked throughout different time periods in God’s Word, and we discovered that all throughout history God noticed people’s giving, and it truly mattered to God.
2. Why would God care about this? It is because our giving reflects the love that we have for God in our heart. **Illustration:** If a husband says that he loves his wife but never gives of himself to her, his actions speak louder than his words and reveal his heart.
3. We saw last week that God notices our giving, and it truly touches His heart. God’s Word said that the Philippians’ giving was like a sweet smell to God, “*wellpleasing.*”
 - Giving is the natural and normal response of a person that loves God.
4. But today, let’s consider this question: “Does the **place** of my giving matter to God?”
 - **Illustration:** Back to the husband and wife – What if the husband is confronted about his lack of giving towards his wife? He responds, “But I’m giving of myself to the guys on the ball-team, the people at church, I’m helping my neighbor’s wife with odd jobs around their house, etc.” Will this be acceptable to his wife? Is it acceptable to God?
 - The place of our giving truly matters, doesn’t it? It matters in the same way in our giving to God.
5. All throughout history, God has had a plan and purpose that He is seeking to fulfill on earth. God has desired that His people give to help **that** plan advance and move forward. The place that God’s people give matters to God.

God’s place of giving in the Old Testament

1. God had a plan to reach the world with His truth in the Old Testament. God would raise up a nation of people that would be a light to all the other nations – the nation of Israel.
2. God would give them a religious law, a religious order, and a religious center of worship called the temple. As Israel obeyed God’s law and God’s instructions, God would mightily bless them and their land. They would testify to the fact that their God was the true and living God.
3. In order to achieve God’s purpose and plan, God mandated that a believer in the Old Testament give a certain amount, and give it to a certain place. Nehemiah 10:34-39
 - The tithe required that the Israelites give 10% of all their income.
 - The tithe was to go to the Levites, who had the responsibility of carrying on the priestly functions of the temple, which was the center of God’s plan in the Old Testament.

- God had ordained that these priests would have their needs provided for by the tithes of God's people. This is how God would fund and advance His work on earth.
4. Jews couldn't just give anywhere they wanted to. God had a specific place.

God's place of giving in His kingdom program

1. Christ came to announce His coming kingdom to Israel. In light of the coming kingdom, Israel was to give. But how, and where?
2. They were to divest themselves of all assets and give willingly and freely of all that they had to those who had need. Luke 12:32-33
3. Right before Christ returns and establishes His kingdom, Satan's evil plans will be at full throttle, and the believing flock will be persecuted, jailed, beaten, and chased from their homes. There will be so many that are poor and needy.
4. This is the place where God will desire that His people give – to those in need. Matthew 25:34-40, 10:40-42; cf. Acts 2:45
5. People today read all the kingdom passages about giving to the poor and needy, and they think that if they are involved in benevolent causes, then they have given as God would have them to give. But we must rightly divide God's Word.

God's place of giving in the time of grace

1. Today, we live a time called the dispensation of grace. God's kingdom program was suspended temporarily with Israel's rejection of Christ. The law has also been done away with.
2. We live in a time that was not prophesied. It was a mystery, hidden in God – a time of grace in which God is offering peace to every individual in the world through the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross.
3. God's plan and purpose for this time period is that all people have the opportunity to hear God's truth so that they can be saved. 1 Timothy 2:4
4. What is God's method today for getting out His truth to people? 1 Timothy 3:15
 - It is the church that supports, proclaims, and holds up the truth of God for others to see it and believe in it. **Example:** 1 Thessalonians 1:8
 - God is working through the church today. He is working through local bodies of believers who unite together in order to study God's truth and proclaim it to the world. This is what God is doing today.
5. But, as always, God's plan must be funded by God's people. The ministry of your local church should be the primary place of your giving in this time period today. 1 Corinthians 9:9-11
6. If a man or ministry is feeding you spiritual food, then that is where you have an obligation to meet carnal, physical needs, so the ministry of the Word can continue.
7. We saw that the Old Testament temple and the Levitical priests were to be supported through a system of tithes and offerings that God's people gave on a regular basis.

8. We are taught that, likewise, those who are teaching the Word of God - ministries who are plowing and planting God's Word in people's hearts - are to be supported through its own people. 1 Corinthians 9:13-14
 - Giving to our local church is required giving because this is where we receive our spiritual nourishment. No kind of giving is to be substituted for this.
9. This is the way God set it up and how it is supposed to function. We don't give out of law, but out of love. We are thankful for the truth of God that is being planted in our hearts, and we want others to hear that truth too. We give so our local church can continue.
10. Unfortunately, many believers today in this time of grace are less committed to God's work through the local church than an Old Testament Jew who gave to the temple.
11. God knew that if each Israelite gave just 10% of their increase to the temple (a dime of each dollar that God blessed them with), that His work would be satisfactorily funded.
 - Do you think this would still hold true today? The work of God through this local would flourish like never before.
12. Today, we have many advantages that they didn't have – we have God's completed Word, the indwelling Holy Spirit, the completed work of Jesus Christ, etc. Yet, why do so few Christians give even the equivalent of an Old Testament Jew?
13. It is very simple. We in America are simply caught up in the affairs of this world. The grip of materialism has us tightly bound, and we don't see clearly what really matters.
14. I believe we cannot please the Lord until we overcome our tendency to be covetous, and we learn the joy of becoming cheerful, bountiful grace givers. 2 Timothy 2:4; 2 Corinthians 9:7
15. Our first priority, above all else, is to our local assembly – to meet the needs of that local church so the truth of God can continue. Does the place of our giving matter to God? Absolutely! In each dispensation, God has a plan and purpose, and God desires that we understand that plan and purpose, and give accordingly.

Does God Reward Those Who Give?

Introduction:

1. God is in heaven, and we are on earth. Sometimes, we get the idea that there is a “disconnect” between God and man. God is in heaven, and He is aloof, and distant, and uninterested in the affairs of planet earth. But, this simply is not true.
2. Consider a few verses in God’s Word: 2 Chronicles 16:9; Proverbs 5:21, 15:3; Hebrews 4:13.
3. In this dispensation of grace, God actually takes up residence **in** the believer and is with you in every single thing you do. Nothing goes unnoticed. 2 Corinthians 6:16
4. We asked the question two weeks ago, “Does God **notice** my giving?” The answer was that God definitely notices our giving. He is ever-watching. He notices the gift and even the heart attitude in which it is given. 2 Corinthians 9:7
5. Because of this fact, we can rest assured that there are rewards for those who exhibit the heart of Christ and are givers. Jesus said, “*It is more blessed to give than to receive.*” There is a blessing in receiving, but **more** of a blessing in giving. Acts 20:35
6. As we will see, this has been true throughout history. We see this principle all throughout God’s Word.

Rewards during God’s law program

1. God made a covenant with His people, Israel, when they came out of Egypt. We call this the Old Testament. God gave Israel a land, a religious center (the temple), a religious system (with various sacrifices offered), and religious leaders (priests and Levites).
2. God also gave to them specific commands regarding giving so that the nation and religious system could function. God required the people to bring their tithes (tenth) to the temple (Deuteronomy 26:12). After they did this, what could they expect God to do?
3. They could fully expect God to look down from heaven, bless them, and bless their land (proper rain and sunshine), and make them high above the other nations. Deuteronomy 26:15, 17-19; cf. Proverbs 3:9-10; Malachi 3:10-12
4. In the Old Testament, if a believer gave to the Lord obediently, he could expect rain for his crops, good fertile soil, and a bountiful harvest each year. God said, “I will bless you physically and materially in such a way that you won’t have room to store it all.”

Rewards during God’s kingdom program

1. Jesus came to earth to call Israel to repentance. Israel had forsaken God’s covenant, and they were very materialistic, very proud, and arrogant. Jesus announced that He was their Messiah and that the kingdom on earth was at hand. They’d better prepare themselves.

2. Jesus instructed the believing flock of Israel to divest themselves of all their earthly assets and give alms (Luke 12:33). They would enter a time period right before the kingdom arrived where a total 100% commitment must be made. Luke 18:22
3. There is example after example of believers doing this. But, Peter asked the Lord a very logical and practical question (Matthew 19:27). He said, "Lord, we have given you everything. Are there going to be any rewards?" How did Jesus answer? vs. 28-29
4. When Christ returns and the kingdom arrives, they can expect to receive back an hundredfold! How is that for interest? This is the context of verses like Luke 6:38.
5. I've heard preachers use this verse in an effort to get believers today to give to their ministries. But that verse has a context. It's funny - they don't live by Luke 6:30!
6. Kingdom giving required that a believer give it all to the Lord, but the believer would receive it back with manifold interest when the kingdom arrived. Matthew 16:27

Rewards during God's grace program

1. The Bible commands us to study the Word of God, and it instructs us as to **how** to study. It says that we must rightly divide the Word of truth. 2 Timothy 2:15
2. You must know where you are at in God's program. You must know what God is doing today on the earth. If not, the Bible will prove to be a very confusing Book.
3. We are living in the dispensation of grace. God's Old Testament law was fulfilled and then nailed to the cross by Christ. God's kingdom program was temporarily suspended due to Israel's rejection of Christ.
4. Christ ascended into heaven as the rejected King, saved His chief enemy (Saul of Tarsus), and revealed to him a special time of grace that He would give to the world based on His cross work. This period of grace was a mystery until it was revealed to the apostle Paul.
5. We are living in this mystery time period of grace. No longer is God dealing with the world through a nation, land area, or religious system, but He is dealing with individuals solely through the completed work of His Son, Jesus Christ.
 - The moment we believe on Christ, God places us **into** Christ and makes us one with Him. He lives within us!
6. In the kingdom program, when they gave, their rewards would be reserved in heaven, and then Christ would bring those rewards to them on earth at His return.
7. But with the body of Christ (believers today), our permanent dwelling place will be in the heavens (Ephesians 2:5-7). When we give today, there is a twofold reward from God (Philippians 4:17):
 - We get to see and enjoy the **fruit** of our giving as people are saved and impacted with the truth of God. We receive the joy of seeing our giving making a difference in people's lives and our own lives.
 - We also know that our giving is abounding to our heavenly account. God notices our giving and will reward us accordingly in heaven. Philippians 4:18; 1 Timothy 6:17-19
8. Are there any promises that God gives to the grace giver in this time period? Philippians 4:19; 2 Corinthians 9:6-8

9. Is it any wonder that Jesus said, “*It is more blessed to give than to receive?*”
Jesus had the wisdom and knowledge to recognize this. Do we?
10. Your giving truly touches the heart of God. Paul said that God **loves** the cheerful giver, and he also said that our giving is “*wellpleasing to God.*”
- **Illustration:** Have your kids ever done something that just really warms your heart, makes you smile, and fills you with joy and pride over them?
 - When we give sacrificially and cheerfully to God’s work on earth, this is how God feels about it. He loves it, and is wellpleased.

Does God See My Heart When I Give? 1 Chronicles 29:6-22

Introduction:

1. Sometimes, when we do good things for others, our motives may not be completely pure. Can you imagine if the other person could see your heart? Imagine if, every time you did something nice for your wife, she could see your heart, and **why** you are doing it. Scary thought?
 - You take her out to a nice dinner, just the two of you. But imagine her being able to see right down into your heart, and see that you are doing it to get on her good side because you secretly ordered the NFL package that week.
2. We have learned that, all throughout history, God has always noticed those who give to Him. But here is the shocker. God not only notices the gift, but He also sees the attitude of the heart when we give. He knows **what** we give, **why** we give, and **how** we give.
3. God cares about our giving because He cares about His relationship with us. When a believer gives to the Lord with a right heart, this reveals our love for the Lord, and it is very special to Him.
4. When we give, and God looks down into our heart, what does God desire to see? Here in our text, the people of Israel gave sacrificially to make possible the building of the temple. Verse 9 says they gave with a "*perfect heart.*" How special this is to God.
5. How can we give to the Lord with a perfect heart?

First, when we give willingly rather than grudgingly

1. Keep in mind, the people are giving so that God's temple can be constructed. I want you to notice something about their giving. Let's read some verses, and you tell me the key word in these verses. vs. 6, 9, 14, 17
2. The key word, of course, is "*willingly.*" This simply means that the people gave voluntarily, or eagerly. Nobody had to twist their arm and coerce them to give.
3. This is so precious to God, when He sees us giving because we love Him, and because we love His work, and we truly **want** to give.
4. This was true in the Old Testament, but it is also true today. Notice 2 Corinthians 9:7. God desires that we give because it is something we have purposed in **our own** heart. He loves it when our giving comes from deep inside of us.
 - The opposite of "willingly" would be "grudgingly" (we do it, but we're not happy) or we give of necessity (we do it because we feel like we have to).
5. The Macedonian believers are a great example of giving to the Lord willingly (2 Corinthians 8:1-5). What was the key to their godly attitude? They first gave their own selves to the Lord. vs. 5
6. Giving wasn't an issue for these people, because their attitude was, "I belong to God, which means everything I possess belongs to God."

Second, when we give joyfully rather than bitterly

1. These people gave willingly to the Lord (vs. 6-8). So, what did their giving produce internally (vs. 9)? They rejoiced with great joy! It reminds me of the verse we read earlier from 2 Corinthians 9:7, “...for God loveth a cheerful giver.”
2. Why would God love a cheerful giver? It is simply because there is no way to give **cheerfully** unless you give **willingly**, and it is that willingness and desire to give that God loves to see. It warms God’s heart when He sees this heart attitude in His children.
 - Have you ever felt like somebody was giving you a gift or buying you a meal at a restaurant because they felt obligated? How did that make you feel?
 - This is how God feels when He looks into our hearts and doesn’t see us truly rejoicing when we give to Him.
3. Think about our Savior, Jesus Christ. He gave His life willingly on the cross for us – for our sins (John 10:15, 18). What did His giving produce? It produced joy (Hebrews 12:2), because Christ didn’t give grudgingly.
4. Giving always produces joy when it is done with a right heart. Self-centeredness always produces misery, but giving is such a Christ-centered thing. This is why there is such a blessedness and joy in giving.

Third, when we give thankfully rather than selfishly

1. This is Thanksgiving weekend. If anybody should be thankful, it is a Christian who has been saved from his or her sins by Jesus Christ! Christ has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.
2. Our motive in giving should be the incredible grace that Christ has poured into our lives. 2 Corinthians 8:9
3. In 1 Chronicles 29, the people gave so willingly and cheerfully. But notice why:
 - They realized that everything in heaven and earth ultimately belongs to God. vs. 11
 - Therefore, everything they possessed came from God. vs. 12
 - What is our logical response? Thankfulness that God has allowed us to use that which He created and belongs to Him. vs. 13
 - It is our thankfulness that produces a desire to return gifts back to Him. vs. 16
4. This is how we can give so willingly. It is because we realize that, without God, we wouldn’t have anything anyway!
5. The grace giver doesn’t give so that we can get back something better from God. We don’t give to get. We give to express our gratitude and appreciation for all He has done for us.
6. The grace giver gives back to God thankfully because he recognizes that everything he has comes from God.
7. This was King David’s attitude. David basically says, “Lord, how can we **not** give to your work? Everything we possess is because of your goodness and grace.”

In Conclusion:

1. Does God notice our heart when we give? Absolutely, He does. These people gave with a perfect (complete, undivided) heart. They gave wholeheartedly. Giving truly is a heart issue.
2. God loves a grace giver. It brings such joy to His heart when He sees a believer giving willingly, joyfully, and thankfully. When our heart is right with God, we don't give out of guilt, or fear, or selfishness. Giving truly becomes an act of worship. vs. 20-22
3. "God, I realize it is not all about me. It is about You and what You are doing on this earth! All that I have is from You and it is all for Your glory!"