



Why Do Christians Give (and how)?

Christians give back to the Lord what belongs to him: our time, our abilities, our money, and our lives. Christians give out of gratitude: everything we have ultimately comes from the Lord. His sovereign generosity provides for us 'our daily bread' (see Matthew 6:11). Christians don't (or shouldn't) give to win God's favour or to impress him. Christians don't (or shouldn't) give to impress others. Christians don't (or shouldn't) give out of guilt. Christians give out of gratitude and out of a sense of stewardship.

But, for various reasons, the issue of Christian giving is fraught. It is common knowledge some Christian groups and leaders manipulate people to give. On the other hand, sometimes other Christian leaders go to the other extreme: they fail to give church members any idea of why and how we give our resources! Christian giving is an important aspect of Christian discipleship!

Writing in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul gives some practical advice concerning financial giving (see 2 Corinthians 8 and 9). First, Paul is not afraid to ask for financial help. In this specific case, he asks the Corinthians to help financially address the dire situation of other churches. Second, Paul recognises the right attitude comes out of the right priority "...they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will." (8:5) This is why Paul calls giving an "act of grace" (8:6). Third, Paul reminds the Corinthians that when it comes to giving, we cannot out give God: "Jesus, though he was rich, yet for our sake he became poor, so that through his poverty we might become rich." (8:9). Fourth, Paul advises that giving be according to our means and done in a deliberate and orderly fashion (8: 10-11, 20 and 9:1-5). Fifth, and finally, Paul assures the Corinthians that while giving may, sometimes, be costly, God always cares

and provides for his people: generous Christian giving is never a foolish act (9: 6-14).

Here's what this advice suggests to us and in our context:

- While we often talk about Christian giving as the stewardship of our “time and talents” and not *just* our money, let’s be aware: ministry costs and costs need to be paid. Staffing, building costs, and practical supplies all need to be financed. We rightly give, and enjoy giving, to specific ministries: ministry training and our mission partners. So, too, however, our general fund requires provision.
- Each person, each household, is free in the Lord to decide how much to give! There is no biblical percentage Christians *must* give. The key is: that we should aim to be deliberate and specific in our giving.
- Our giving doesn’t have to be exclusive to our local church. There are other ministries or organisations to which we are free to give financially. But, at the same time, our local church fellowship is in a good position to distribute giving to organisations and ministries we might not be able to support on our own. Clearly, our local church has costs too (see above)!
- Our giving ought to be orderly and regular. In our context, monthly giving is typical. Not only does this aid those responsible for finances to have a good idea about regular income and dispersal, but it also helps us personally (call it sound budgeting). If you wish, it is helpful to set up a monthly direct debit or standing order. Equally, if you are a UK taxpayer, filling out a Gift Aid form enables the church to claim back from HMRC a regulated benefit. Our treasurer can help you with this regular giving (and in total confidentiality) and with Gift Aid if you wish.
- Giving is a privilege – in fact, it is a joy!