

MONEY MATTERS – GIVING TO GOD

The following are resource questions that you can use with your Care Group for discussion. They are based on the sermon preached on Sunday, May 2, 2010, by Dr Arnold Wong at the Grace Baptist Church, Singapore. The sermon is available online at <http://www.gracebap.org.sg/worship/series.html>.

May 2, 2010

Introduction: In the three earlier studies we have talked about being focused on being Godly, contented and aware of the dangers of pursuing money. We also discussed on how we should bless others with our resources and be focused on earning money honestly, wisely and diligently. Now we want to look at how we should be giving to God.

1. *Our giving to the Lord should be purposeful:*

- **Meeting the needs of individuals. Philippians 4:15-16**

Each offering in the church, and each gift of any Christian to any specific need, ought to be something that is given in such a willing, gracious, generous expression of the love and thanksgiving of the heart that God is just simply delighted as he knows it is the spirit of love within that prompts this kind of giving.

How was the giving of the church in Phillipi purposeful? The implication is that the church was in contact with Paul and was aware of his needs. And that the Philippian Church felt that they were a part of Paul's ministry. This is an example for us to follow as we relate to the missionaries that we support.

- **Meeting the needs of groups of people, 2 Corinthians 8:1-5**

The only true motive for giving is the grace of God, the goodness of God to you. In the New Testament giving is never legislated upon us. It is given to us as a privilege that we can express the gratitude of our hearts for the grace that God has already given.

- What was the condition of the churches in Macedonia?

- Yet what did they have in abundance?

- What three things are said in how they gave?

- How did they go beyond Paul's expectations?

- **Priorities should be our immediate family, Church family and others..**

If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. 1 Timothy 5:8

This verse was given in the context of taking care of the widows. Today there is a great need to take care of the older ones in our fellowship. Starting first with our own families. No family action more fully reveals the glory of Christian grace than to see children lovingly supplying the needs of their older parents—visiting them, making them feel comfortable, loved and wanted if they have to be supported outside the home, or opening their homes and allowing them to be a central part of their life.

- **Then there is the command to do good to the family of believers. Galatians 6: 7-10**

- Do you believe that you reap what you sow?

- Do you find it hard to keep doing the right thing without thanks or encouragement?

- What "good things" do you feel Paul is saying you should share with your instructor?

- What do you feel Paul means by becoming weary in doing good?

- List and discuss some ways you can keep from becoming weary.

2. *Our Giving to the Lord is between us and God. Matthew 6:1-4*

The issue Jesus is dealing with in this passage is *motive*. Why do we give to others who are less fortunate than ourselves? It would seem that Jesus exposes an underlying motive to giving, namely having our generosity recognized or acknowledged. We don't like giving in a vacuum—we want there to be a return for our effort, a positive, affirming response.

Jesus invites His listeners to give up the inadequate and elusive reward they can receive from others and to give in such a way that they receive a response from their Heavenly Father. Unlike humans, who only see each other on display in public, God sees in secret because He is watching us, He is paying attention to us. He can see what other cannot. He can see our hearts as well as our acts.

3. *Our Giving to the Lord should be planned. 1 Corinthians 16:1-2*

Everywhere Paul went, wherever he founded a church, he taught them to give, because giving is an essential part of Christianity. It is not an option; it is something every Christian must do.

This is one of the first indications we have in the epistles that the Christians, by this time, had begun to gather regularly to worship and pray and give on the first day of the week, Sunday. The Christians worshipped on that day because it was the day that Jesus rose from the dead. So the apostle gathers this whole matter of giving and associates it as flowing out of their wonder at the resurrection of Jesus, and their worship of a risen Lord. Then, giving is a personal act,

...each one of you...

He does not leave anybody out. Even children ought to be taught to give. On every Sunday there ought to be a gift from every Christian. It is not the amount that is important it is the regularity of it, the fact that there is a continual reminder that you have freely received, therefore, freely give. So each one is to do this. It is, in that sense, really not an option. It is a necessity growing out of our relationship to Christ.

..as he may prosper...

That means you give according to the way God has given to you. Has he poured out abundantly? Then give abundantly. Are you having a hard time and barely making it? Well, then your gift can be reduced proportionately. It ought to be something, but it can be very little because God is really not interested in the total amount at all. He is only interested in the motive of the heart in giving.

4. *Our Giving to the Lord ought to be positive. 2 Corinthians 9:6-11*

In this remarkable picture from Macedonia we see what is the first unmistakable mark of true Christian giving, a liberality which is marked by enthusiasm. Enthusiastic giving is Christian giving. A little later on in this same section Paul says, "*God loves a cheerful giver*," (2 Corinthians 9:7). The word "*cheerful*" is the same root from which our word "*hilarious*" is derived. God loves hilarious giving.

He is speaking of the joy that is inherent in the act of giving when the spirit is so moved to participate in the work of God that the gift is given with hilarious enthusiasm. That is what you see here in Macedonia.

Giving must not be reluctant. We are not to give because we are forced to. It is to be with liberality, perhaps even, as in the case of these Macedonians, coming out of a background of sheer, stark, poverty.

Remember we are told the Lord Jesus "*sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the multitude putting money into the treasury*." There is a sense in which he always does that. He watches as we drop our check into the offering plate or coin into the box or mail it off. And he knows the intent of our hearts in this, and that is why the apostle so strongly says, "*God loves a cheerful giver*", a hilarious giver, one who gladly pours it out. This delights His heart, because this is the way He gives. When we give this way, the result will be the fulfillment of the promise of verse 19: "*And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.*"