

## **Thanksgiving for the Blood of Jesus by Giving to the Bride of Christ, the Church**

Before we get into the message I would like to say a few things. The first being that those of us who give, and give generously, faithfully, joyfully and sacrificially you do so as a faithful servant ought to do, but as the Apostle Paul would say, excel still more. Now those of us who do not do so, then I pray that this message will be more than just words spoken, but will become actions.

The second thing is that a topical sermon outside of a Thanksgiving, Christmas, or Resurrection topical sermon is a tremendously rare thing. It is not unprecedented here at Hope Community Bible Church, but it does happen, and today is one such occasion. This is also on a topic that very rarely preached from the pulpit, mainly because it is not the primary focus of our Pastor. His focus is teaching what the word of God says through expository preaching, and the only time this topic is mentioned is when it is within that week's text. So that is the disclaimer if you will for this morning's message, let us begin.

I want you to imagine someone, perhaps a spouse, or yourself, maybe your child sitting on the couch with a cold can of grape soda in one hand and the remote in the other, with a big bag of potato chips lying in front of them. Their eyes glued to the television set for hours, their brain not responding to anything, their body only moving to bring that can up to their lips or to throw a chip into their mouth. Perhaps they have crumbs all over their shirt from lazily and sloppily munching on those chips.

What would you call this person? Lazy, perhaps, gluttons, that is a fun one, but how about just the old fashioned couch potato. A couch potato is someone who takes in a good show, something exciting, something a little dangerous, but with some mystery to keep them coming back for more, but when it comes to action, they are not in shape or compelled to do it. They are takers, not givers.

We live in a world that is beset with many problems that have something of alike to the couch potatoes around us. Heart disease is at an all time high, Cholesterol is up, Productivity is down, in this information age, we do not read as much as we should. As a result we do not write or speak as well as we used to, grades in school are lower and crime is higher.

I am not saying that we need to run home and throw out our television sets and our grape soda and our chips. I use this illustration because I believe there is

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another type of potato that we need to consider. **That being a Pew Potato**, you laugh, but how true it that. A Pew Potato would be someone sitting in a spot just like yours listening to a good show, taking in a little excitement, a little mystery to keep us coming back for more, listening to some catchy tunes.

A pew potato is a Christian who makes his way into the sanctuary at every available opportunity to sit and watch what is going on while snacking on his or her religion. Probably all of us have played the part of a pew potato at some point in our lives and like the couch potato we are disinclined to Christian activity or exertion. For many, Christianity is a spectator sport. They come and watch what is going on and never involve themselves in the working of the kingdom.

**Let us face it...service is not the most exciting thing we can do.**

It is hard to put ourselves at bay and serve others. Especially when we are talking about working in the nursery, or teaching Children's Church, opening doors, or picking up dropped bulletins after service or helping setup or tear down. And one of the hardest ways of service is giving financially. There I said it. Yes I will be speaking on giving money to the church as an act of sacrificial worship and service.

Finances can be a great challenge for all of us. I know sometimes we run out of money before we run out of month. And that is why it is very important to understand what the bible teaches about money. I know we just memorized Luke 16:13, and it speaks about we either worship God or worship money, but not both. So who do you worship, God? But would your bank statement say the same?

Do you know that if you withhold your service or your giving you are robbing God? Who wants to be the one who tells God he cannot have something? What right would we have to do such a thing? Is not all things God's? For those of us who believe that the material wealth that we have is not a blessing from God I give you these 3 passages to consider:

1 Corinthians 4:7 "For who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?"

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If you are someone who says “What I have I have made with these very hands, or I have worked long and hard and been faithful, so I have earned it,” does so out of pride. Pride is a very strange sin, because if we say how non prideful we are, that could very well be pride speaking. Sin is deceitful, that is why it is so important to not forsake the gathering of the saints so that we can keep each other from sinning.

James 1:17 “Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.”

Do we live in an imperfect world? Are we imperfect beings? Do we do things with impure intentions? If the answer to those questions are yes, then I ask you this further question: What in your life is perfect? Not much save your salvation right, which you have received from above, and not by works of your hands, intentions of your heart, your bible reading plan, your Sunday morning attendance, but for His own name sake has God called you to Himself. A perfect salvation because we were not involved.

However, what about all the other stuff in your life, your clothes, your cars, your house, your job, your finances, your spouse, your parents, your children, your skillsets, your spiritual gifts, whatever it is, are they yours that you have made them or earned them? Many athletes will say that they have a God-given gift. And I submit to you that that is a very true statement, whether that very athlete is God fearing or not.

But how do we know that those material things and even personal things are a blessing from God. Well we know that God is good, for He is the standard of good.

Luke 18:19 And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.”

So if God is good, would he ever give a bad thing, would He make us sin? No He would not, sin is not in His nature, only good. Matthew 5:45 tells us that He

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causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.”

So all that we have materially and spiritually, the people in our lives and even the events of our lives are gifts from above and they are all good. If you still have doubt turn to Romans 8:28. Are you one who has been called according to His purposes? In our Ephesians study we have seen time and time again where Paul is exhorting the Ephesian church to live in a manner worthy of their calling in which they have been called. Are you doing that? First you have to believe that you have been called, that God is sovereign and that our standing has not really changed. Sure we are dead to sin and alive to Christ, we are a new creature fashioned for service. But what I am talking about is that we are not free, we are still slaves, we have only changed masters. Where we were once slaves to sin and wickedness, we are now slaves to Christ and righteousness.

Now back to Romans 8:28 where we read “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” Sounds to me like God did this and God is the focus and God as a plan right? So thanks be to God for all that we have.

I want you all to understand this point and it will be our big idea this morning:

I am a mere steward of the possessions and gifts that God has entrusted to me and I am to employ them for the service of the King and to advance the working of His Kingdom.

We have nothing of ourselves to contribute, only what God has deemed we need for the moment. We have such a variety of situations in this very room, but remember, it is God who provides all things. It is not what we have; it is how we handle what we are given. I know I have been blessed by several families in this room and some that are no longer here over the years. Those people are giving out of a pot which they have, some larger than others, but they give because they love. Not that the size of giving equals the size of love.

So now that we have made it through this morning’s introduction let us begin with understanding how any of what I just said applies to this thing called giving. For the next several hours we will discuss the many different reasons why we are

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to give. Ok so we do not have several hours but I will cover 13 reasons why we are to give to the church. There are 13 points because I do not have time for 20.

1 Timothy 5:8 speaks very firmly in being disciplined with our finances, when it says “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.” Let that not be said of any of us. Disciplined money usage is first and last a spiritual issue.

I do want us to have a correct view of a word that I will use throughout. That word being offering, this word means something of value is offered, especially as a gift or contribution. Every time you hear the word offer, just replace it with the word gift. It changes the meaning of what it is from offering it to God to gifting to God.

We have somehow changed the daily definition of these words. In general terms we offer help or assistance, denoting that we are in a superior position to assist those who are inferior. We gift something to those that we love, who we hold in higher honor, those we cherish, those we do not want to lose or let go.

### **I. God Owns Everything You Own**

As I alluded to earlier we do not own what we own. It is God’s because well He created all things and therefore owns all things. Your house...He owns, your car...He owns, your TV...He owns, your smartphone, your computer, your bikes, your toys, Oh yes, those are His too. Your jobs have been given to you by Him, to place you where He wants you, and if the jobs that we work at are His, than it is not a big stretch for us to say our paychecks are His too.

Psalms 24:1 states that “The earth is the Lord’s, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it.” **Unless your stuff is outside the boundaries of God’s creation then you cannot claim it as your own, can you tell me where His domain ends and yours begins. All that there is, is His and His alone. Our families, our bodies, our minds, are all His.** Something so menial as money should be His. Should we not return a portion of it to Him?

We are stewards of His creation. This earth is ours and we are to be stewards of it. God has given us dominion over it, now it is up to us to be good stewards or

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bad stewards. **We can use it, but we should not abuse it**, same thing applies to our finances, we can spend it on going to Disney or Six Flags or expand our Clint Eastwood or John Wayne collection, **but we should never do these things and not give to the church.** That would be a bad stewardship of the blessings that the Father has provided us.

Slaves own nothing, and since we are slaves, nothing is our own, the righteousness that we now have, the very lives we now live, our very salvation, are not our own, and I would submit to you this, **that these things are far more important than any earthly home or a metal box on wheels.** Those things are in a constant rate of decay even now.

Do not take my word for this, let us look to scripture.

Psalm 50:10 “For every beast of the forest is Mine, the cattle on a thousand hills.”

Haggai 2:8 “The silver is Mine and the gold is Mine, declares the Lord of hosts.”

Ezekiel 18:4 “Behold, all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine. The soul who sins will die.”

Romans 14:8 “...for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s.”

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?  
20 For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.”

### **II. Jesus Will Only Build the Church**

In Matthew 16:18 Jesus said to His disciples, “I will build My church.” In this context, Jesus is referring to all Christians of all time everywhere belongs to Him, for when He calls it “My Church” he is declaring His ownership, His headship. Not only does the universal church belong to Him but so does every local expression of it belong to Him as well. So when you give to this very church you are giving to what Jesus owns. **To put that in simpler terms, when you give to the church you are helping Christ build His Church.**

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Let me talk for a moment about giving to other charitable organizations. It is good and it is ok to support such organizations, with a very large caveat. Remember Ephesians 5:25: 25 “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her.” All other ministries should exist to support the church. These organizations would be called parachurch ministries, para meaning by the side of. These charities and these organizations should be helping the church fulfill its mandate of serving widows and orphans, helping the poor, but more importantly spreading the gospel as they serve. Meals-on-Wheels is a good organization, but if they do not present the gospel and speak to those receiving meals, it is not serving in building up the body of Christ.

Gene Getz wrote this in the book called *A Biblical Theology of Material Possessions*.

“Any view, then, of how Christians should use their material possessions must focus first and foremost on local churches. This is what we see in the Bible. To bypass this important concept in Scripture is, in essence, to ignore what is recorded by gifted men inspired by the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, if Christians bypass the concept of the local church, they will inevitably violate a number of other important principles.

By giving to other such organizations and not the local church we are actually helping to displace the church. This extra giving is just that, additional, not in place of. Never use the excuse or the reason to not give to the church because you support a child in Argentina. Again that is a good work you are doing, but we are called to first support our local church. If you are a member or even a regular attender of a local body you are to give to the church. Members of Hope Community Bible church you have agreed to and be held accountable to give financially to this body.

You have no excuse not to give. If you do not have it in your budget to do so...well all I can tell you is to readjust your priorities and adjust your budget. I am not standing up here to give a financial class or even advice, **but I will tell you that if you tell me you cannot give to the church, but then run out to have lunch at a restaurant and spend \$40...you do have money to give to God**, you just would rather spend it on your own desires. I do not say this to be mean or to be

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ugly, I am telling you because of love and because I want you to have a right relationship with your Heavenly Father and not to be deceived.

### **III. Giving Helps Fulfill the Great Commission**

Matthew 28:19-20 Jesus told His disciples right before He ascended into Heaven:

19 “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

By giving to the local church we are supporting this very ministry. We have how many missionaries? 4. Ireland, India, China, Japan. Yes we support them financially and part of our giving goes to support them. Now evangelizing is not an exclusive act to people who hold the title of missionary, so you cannot say that you give financial support and therefore you do not have to speak about God to anyone outside these walls, because we have a much deeper evangelizing opportunity right here in this country and specifically in Northwest Arkansas.

### **IV. Giving Is an Act of Worship**

Who comes here to worship our great God and King? Please do not respond outwardly to this next question, but do you give to the church financially every time you come to worship? I ask that because giving financially is an act of worship. It is an act of obedience. It is sacrificial worship. We do this with our time, there are so many other things we could be doing on a Sunday than being here listening to me, but here we are, offering praise to God for what He has provided. **That He would use us to bring glory to Himself and lift on high the name above all names who is Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.**

So how do we worship Him by dropping a check or some cash into the offering box? Because it is offering something up to God, that word offering we tend to only reserve it to the giving of money. **What, do we do when we pray, we are offering something up to God, what, do we do when we sing; we are offering something up to God. What do we do when we are journaling, or reading our bibles, or memorizing scripture?** We are offering something up to God. What do



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we do when we drop money into that wooden box? We start to worry of the shrinking number in our bank account.

People sometimes only give as many times as they get paid. In other words if they get paid every two weeks they give to the Lord every two weeks. I see the logic in this thinking, you just got paid, and you are giving first to the Lord and then you get the rest to do as you please right? Good job in giving first to the Lord, however, **I will say that you are missing the point of worship. You are only worshipping when it is convenient. Is it convenient to come every Sunday morning, or Sunday evening? Is it convenient to come to youth group every Wednesday or Bible study every Thursday? Our level of commitment to worship should never be about convenience. Did Christ's level of commitment to worship rest on convenience?** Remember the night of His betrayal? He was up very late praying and prayed for so long that the disciples could not stay awake. Do you have that level of commitment to worship? Does your giving reflect that?

We do not sing all our worship songs on the first Sunday, and then the rest of the month we do not have to sing, that is just silly, **so why do we do that with our financial giving**, because we are not good stewards of the blessings from the Father, perhaps? **It is worship, not a checkbox.**

So when you give, you might want to utter a brief, silent prayer such as "Thank You Lord" being thankful for His providence and His caring for you. If you give without thought of Who it is you are giving to, **then it is not an act of worship or obedience, it is an act of tradition. Just as a preacher can preach without thinking of God, or someone in the congregation can sing a song of worship without thinking of God, so you can give without thinking of God.** This is hypocrisy at worst and spiritual carelessness at best.

### V. Giving Reflects Faith in God's Provision

The proportion of your income that you give back to God testifies to how much you trust Him to provide for your needs...let me say that again. The proportion of your income that you give back to God testifies to how much you trust Him to provide for your needs.

In Mark 12:41-44 we see trust in the provision of God to meet our needs

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“41 And He (that being Jesus) sat down opposite the treasury, and began observing how the people were putting money into the treasury; and many rich people were putting in large sums. 42 A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which amount to a cent. 43 Calling His disciples to Him, He said to them, “Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury; 44 for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on.”

If you are someone who does not give for reasons of concern for the rest of the month...I exhort you to review your reasons against this very passage. Measure your logic against scripture. **I am not here to tell you, you need to give 10% or 20% or every year you need to increase your giving by the rate of inflation. These things are not biblical in the age of the Church. The 10% giving is a good goal to give, but it is not biblical.**

### VI. Giving Should Be Sacrificial and Generous

You should never give according to whether you can afford it or not. That is trusting in the wrong thing. You are demonstrating that you are trusting in gold and silver and the work of your own hands. Take a look at 2 Corinthians 8:1-4.

1 Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, 2 that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. 3 For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord, 4 begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints...”

There is a lot of things that we can dissect here and I will try and do that real quick. In verse 1 Paul is telling the church at Corinth about the magnitude of the giving from the churches in Macedonia. We need to understand that Macedonia was an abysmally poor region, ravaged by wars and plundering. Their giving was motivated by God’s grace and not by what they had. In verse 2 we see that the giving was generous. Essentially this verse tells us that the Macedonian churches gave without concern for themselves. When we are concerned for our own well-being or financial condition our ability to give becomes hindered and crippled.

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Verse 3 we see that giving is to be both proportionate and sacrificial. Proportioned, does not mean that you give a 10% or a \$50 a week amount. By setting such a goal amount would prove to be sacrificial to some but not to others. This same verse tells us that the Macedonians gave beyond their means. When was the last time you gave to the needs of the church beyond your means? When you could not afford that Starbucks pumpkin spice latte because you gave that money to God?

I do not have time to get into it, but giving is not the same as tithing. Giving is voluntary, tithing, is by command that transcends the Mosaic Law. Abraham gave 10%, however, if we spend the time and study the tithing of Abraham, it is revealed that Abraham gave 10% of the spoils of war, not of what he earned and all his possessions it was only a 1 time giving. So if you want to "tithes" you could do so off of 1 time things, like annual bonuses or proceeds from the sale of a house. Why would we follow the Old Testament law of tithing and not of animal sacrifices or Sabbath day observance? The Law was not abolished but made complete through Christ's atoning death and resurrection. He gave us new commands to follow and that is to love our God with all our heart, our soul, our mind, and our strength, Mark 12:30. Part of loving God is by giving joyfully to the church.

In verse 4 we can see that giving is a privilege and not an obligation. The Macedonia churches first heard that the Corinthian church was giving, and they had the desire to give. Paul may not have even asked the Macedonia churches to give, knowing of their deep poverty. But they still gave and Paul is now encouraging the Corinthian church to give more. Corinth was a port city and had tremendous amount of commerce and trade and therefore was a wealthy city. So the Macedonian churches gave out of their extreme poverty and Paul was exhorting the Corinthian believers to essentially step up their game.

Polls consistently show that the more money Americans make, the less sacrificially we give. Would you not agree that if we are making more money than ever but giving a smaller percentage than before, then we are not giving sacrificially? **Let me remind you that giving is not sacrificial unless you sacrifice to give. Many Christians give only token amounts to the work of God's**

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**kingdom. A much smaller number give well. But only a few actually give sacrificially.**

### **VII. Giving Reflects Spiritual Trustworthiness**

Jesus spoke about this in Luke 16:10-13

10 “He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much. 11 Therefore if you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous wealth, who will entrust the true riches to you? 12 And if you have not been faithful in the use of that which is another’s, who will give you that which is your own? 13 No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.”

Notice verse 11 which says that our giving reflects our spiritual trustworthiness: “Therefore if you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous wealth, who will entrust the true riches to you?” If we are not faithful with the money God entrusts to us – and certainly that includes the giving of our money for Christ’s kingdom – the Bible says God will deem us untrustworthy to handle spiritual riches.

Can you be trusted as a faithful servant of the Lord? A worker who is devoted to the kingdom of God? A couple of things that will tell you if you are:

- Do you make every effort to be in fellowship, not just corporately but for one on ones, lunches, texting, bible studies.
- Are you on time when the saints are gathering
- Are you studying God’s word consistently
- Are you memorizing God’s word
- Are you sacrificially supporting the work that God has commanded

Are you doing these things? If so, excel still more. If not, why not? Give genuine consideration to changing and being obedient to the word of God. How you manage the financial “department” of your life is one of the best ways of evaluating your relationship with Christ and your spiritual trustworthiness. That is why it is said that your bank statement tells more about you than anything else. We will do many things before we will give to someone else – even to Jesus – We

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have been given dominion over every dollar, but if you have surrendered that right to Him, your giving will show it.

### **VIII. Giving by Love, Not Legalism**

God does not send you a bill, and the church will never send you a progress report on your “pledge” of giving. Love to God should motivate giving to God. How much you give should reflect how much you love God. There is not a secret unwritten commandment to give to the church. We can see this in 2 Corinthians 8 starting in verse 7:

7 “but just as you abound in everything, in faith and utterance and knowledge and in all earnestness and in the love we inspired in you, see that you abound in this gracious work also. 8 I am not speaking this as a command, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity of your love also.”

The Apostle Paul was not laying out another command to follow, but was instructing believers in how to demonstrate the devotion and the genuine love they had for Christ and His church. Paul reiterates and even makes it clearer that this is not a command to merely follow, but a demonstration of the individual’s love for his Savior.

We see in 2 Corinthians 9:7

7 “Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”

To give under order and under command would become a duty to be fulfilled and therefore not a demonstration of the joy and love that we should have.

An interesting analogy was done by Don Whitney on this topic:

Suppose that it is Valentine’s Day and for those men who are married you come up to your wife and present a dozen of her favorite flowers and say very enthusiastically “Happy Valentine’s Day” She would naturally respond with something like this, “Oh thank you they are beautiful, you should not have spent so much money.” Now if you respond neutrally with “Do not mention it. Today is Valentine’s Day, and as your husband it is my duty to get a gift for you.” How do

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you think she would feel, probably not very loved and not very important right? Now instead of responding like that, husbands you respond with something like this “There is nothing I would rather do with my money than use it for you because I love you so much.” Someone will need Kleenexes as well.

You see it is all about having the right motives. God wants us to give as a symbol of our overflowing love for Him and His great grace.

### **IX. Giving Supports the Ministry That Supports Us**

I hope you all understand that what you give goes to pay the bills. It keeps the lights on and the fire warm. We pay our rent, we pay our missionaries, we pay our pastor through what we give. **Quite frankly we cannot afford to pay our pastor, and if that does not upset you, then you do not understand the job of a pastor.**

It is not confined to a Monday through Friday 8 to 5 job with weekends and holidays off. It is not just a Sunday gig. It is a demanding occupation, spiritually speaking, it is a life or death struggle, he is always on call, no matter what day or what time it is. On average I would say that he works more than any of us. He writes an equivalent of a 15 page research paper every week for the morning service, then has to write a lesson for the evening service, and then put something together for the Thursday night bible study. Your Pastor leads music and even puts the list of music together. He does counseling sessions, he meets with the elders, with the rest of the leadership team, and he meets with other men throughout the week for lunch and other discussions. He is a busy man, even as a fellow elder, we sometimes have to plan a meeting a week or two out because he is so busy.

I know he would not say this and I am not using this opportunity to raise his salary, but I believe he is underpaid. For those of us who were at the business meeting you see what the compensation is, do you think honestly that he is paid as he should? But I tell you he does not get regular raises simply because we cannot afford to give him one. If you do not know what and how your pastor is compensated, you need to. You are either supporting him or you are not by what you give or do not give.

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### **X. Give Willingly, Thankfully, and Cheerfully**

Again we see this in 2 Corinthians 9:7 “Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”

God does not want your giving if you give with a grudge, with a heart full of regret for the loss of that money. God is not a pesky landlord with an outstretched greedy hand demanding His due, having not a care about your heart attitude. Just like with prayer, you are to approach the throne of God with the right heart attitude.

Some people give to God like they fork over to the IRS. Others give to God like they pay their electric bill. But a few people give to God like they give an engagement ring to their fiancée or like they give presents to an ecstatic 4 year old. Some give because they know they cannot keep it. Others give because they believe they owe it. And a happy few give because they say they cannot help it! **Are you a giver who gives to God because you cannot help it, or out of a feeling of you owe it?**

God wants you to give with a heart of thankfulness. **Giving to the Church shows Him your love and your gratitude for what He has done for you. He humbled Himself, descended into a body of flesh. He put aside His divinity so to speak, by doing nothing except the work of the Father, being betrayed, being beaten and scoffed at. Being nailed to a cross, suffering upon suffering for hours. Then dying for crimes that we committed,** and yet we cannot afford to give to the church.

**Why do you hold back such an opportunity for you to praise Him, to show your love and your trust in Him? No one else sees what you do, but He does. Why deprive Him of His glory, why deprive Him of your love?**

### **XI. Giving to Response to Real Needs**

There are times when real and specific needs arise within the church. Our church has seen a few over the years. Some large, some small, some urgent, others a more standing need. A number of years ago in the 13<sup>th</sup> street building the furnace went out in the dead of winter. We were bundled up during the service and by

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the closing song, there was more sniffles than singing. There was a need, and it was urgent, not just because of the discomfort of the saints, but the protection of the rest of the building. Pipes could freeze causing more costly repairs; electronics do not do well in sub-freezing temperatures. **It was an urgent need and it was met through giving.**

We have a standing need to increase both our building fund and our brotherhood fund, but these are not urgent needs right now. We also have needs for our Awana ministry and Youth Group ministry as events and things will come up that we will need funding for. We have also asked for giving when we had 3 of our foreign missionaries come in. We have done this, but what does the bible say about these specific asks for giving? These would be giving on top of the normal giving.

In Acts we see 2 different times where Christians gave to the church in response to specific needs. The first time was right after the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:43-45 where we read this:

43 “Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. 44 and all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; 45 and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have a need.”

It says in verse 44 “all those who had believed were together and had all things in common.” This is not speaking to things in common as in spiritual terms, but in physical. Many of these new believers were from out of town and only visiting Jerusalem and therefore only had money for a predetermined length of time. Since they had received the Holy Spirit, they had a transformed heart and wanted, almost needed to stay with the saints and to fellowship.

Now understand that these newly converted Christians could not just go home and attend their home town church, as the gospel had not spread and churches had not been founded. So there are now thousands of new believers who can no longer provide for themselves. The believers who had things to sell or money to give gave so that others who did not could stay in Jerusalem. You can see that there is several attributes of giving going on here.



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The first is joyful giving they were in unison there was not a call for only the better off or an income bracket to give. The second is sacrificial giving, they gave whatever currency they had and even sold property, animals, houses, whatever they had they sold and gave. The third attribute, is a desire for fellowship. These people were not seeking just companionship, because they could get it anywhere since Jerusalem was heavily populated at the time. **Do you give so that fellowship may occur?**

The next time we see this type of giving is in Acts 4:32-35:

32 “And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them. 33 and with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all. 34 For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales 35 and lay them at the apostles’ feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had need.”

Look at verse 32 “those who believed were of one heart and soul” they were all set and agreed on a course of action and how they cared for one another “and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own.” That goes back to what we said earlier, that all things are from the Father, your house, your car, your cows...if you own any. **They are a gift to you to handle and to employ for His glory.**

We ought to be aware of each other when we give to the church. When you give to the church you are helping your brothers and sisters in Christ fellowship and corporately worship God. We also see that these new disciples were laying the money at the feet of the apostles. My understanding is that they did not literally lay the money on the ground in front of the Apostles. More likely it is worded this way to reflect that the money was given to the church under the leadership of the Apostles. It was not exchanged from one believer to another, but was handled and distributed by the church, who became a steward of the financial gifts given.

We see that giving to these special and specific needs is real and biblical; when such a need arises do you give and do you give with a joyful heart?

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### **XII. Giving Should be Planned and Systematic**

In 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 we see this example lined out by Paul:

1 “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. 2 On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come.”

Specifically Paul is calling on the Corinthian church to begin to take up offerings for the famine that is to come. He is doing so far in advance to his arrival. This example demonstrates planned giving. We see it first in the verse 2, “On the first day of every week.” Not the first Sunday of the month, not the Sunday after payday, but every Sunday. It then tells us so that no collections will need to be made. Some may earmark the money on the off week and then give it the following week. This is not biblical behavior, and I have to confess that I have done this in the past, when money is short. **But we must be in the habit of giving every week. This makes us better stewards of what we have and consequently smarter spenders, which will cause of to pause before we make those impulse buys.**

There are many things that we can do to correct our non-biblical giving habits. One way is to look at when you get paid and when all your bills are due. Sometimes you can change when your due date is on some items. This will spread out your expenses throughout the month, making for a more even payment structure. Another way is to give your main giving after you are paid and then still giving something on the other Sundays; again it is not the amount that you give, but the joy of giving.

If you are someone who is paid every two weeks and then give only on those Sunday's after payday, let us look at this a little differently. There are a total of 52 Sundays in a year, and you are giving only half of the time. That means you have a participation percentage of 50%. Tell me where in all of your worldly experiences is 50% a good thing? How many tests will you pass with 50%? What about a driver's test, How about a productivity report at work of 50%? What if you attend school or work only half the time or turned in your homework or

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projects half the time? You would not be a good student or a good employee; you would not be a good steward of the things you have been entrusted with.

Just to continue this example, if you give \$50 every 2 weeks and you give nothing on the off weeks, than split the amount. Give \$25 every week. If you keep it in a bank account and are afraid of spending it if you do not give it. Then take it out of your account, seal it in an envelope ready to place in the offering box.

All self-identified Christians should express their stewardship of God's money through giving. Now I pray that this next statement will not be found true amongst any of us. Just because we give in other ways, Awana, Youth Group, Bible Studies, Children's Church, Nursery, Set up, tear down, Missions does not exclude us from giving financially.

Again God owns all that we have so we are to give, whether it is through our time, our skills, our talents, our spiritual gifts, or our money. What do you think would happen if Jesus used that same excuse:

Jesus spent 3 and a half years teaching and preaching who God really was, **He healed the sick and the lame whenever He was teaching, He cast out demons by the hundreds and even raised people from the dead. He prayed, He fasted, He memorized Scripture, He even paid His taxes. Could He give something less than His life as an offering to God because of all the other things He did?** Then how can we expect one act of giving to cancel out another?

George Muller asked this:

"Are you giving systematically to the Lord's work, or are you leaving it to feeling, to impression made upon you through particular circumstances, or to striking appeals? If we do not give from principle systematically, we shall find that our one brief life is gone before we are aware of it, and that, in return, we have done little for that adorable One who bought us with His precious blood, and to whom belongs all we have and are."

XIII. Generous Giving Results in Bountiful Blessing

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This idea was not thought up in a vacuum, it is not some sort of possible interpretation depending on the underlying church affiliation doctrine. No this is biblical, what you give will be given unto you. Now you may be thinking “hey wait a minute there elder, perhaps your youthful age has not afforded you enough wisdom here, but are you saying if I give a large sum then I should get a large blessing, so by my works I should be expecting a really big blessing?”

Well not so much. Again it comes down to your heart attitude. **Are you giving out of joy and with an overflow of love to the One who died for you? Or are you giving out of a sense of getting. I give so that I can get?** Not a good attitude to have. I tell you that we are slaves, and even if you do not like that word, well it is what we are. Anyway answer me this question what does a slave deserve for doing what they should be doing? **Nothing**, we say it all the time that we do not deserve any of the many blessings from the Father, yet we do not sacrifice to Him.

But let us look to scripture to understand this.

2 Corinthians 9:6-8

6 “Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed;”

When you sow you will reap, also what you sow is what you will reap. But understand that by how much and the attitude of your sowing, the Father will be faithful in His blessing to you. Just to be clear these are not necessarily earthly blessings that He will bless you with.

Look at Luke 6:38

38 “Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure – pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.”

I like the image here about pressed down, shaken together and running over. You can get more clothes into a suitcase if you press down on the lid before you zip it

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closed. How many more chips could they really put into those bags if they would just shake it while they fill them? How nice is it when you order fries and they fill the fry container up so much that they overflow into the bottom of the bag? You get bonus fries.

Is that the type of blessing that you desire from God, and when I say blessing I am not even focused on financial blessing, imagine if He would give you wisdom like that, or courage to speak the gospel with an uncontrollable boldness?

Since this very topic will bring up thoughts about the whole prosperity gospel let me be very clear. The Prosperity gospel, "Name it and Claim it" theology is heresy. Nowhere does it ever say that if you give a lot God will provide you financial blessing. You cannot buy the favor of God the Almighty by dropping a few extra dollars in the offering box. **God is not persuaded by our money, how could He, it already belongs to Him.**

As I wrap this up if we consider ourselves to be Christians then it is our responsibility to act as such. Christianity does not have a list of do's and don'ts. It is about the changed heart, the new life that you live to Christ and in Christ and through Christ.

I have laid out many questions this morning. These are meant to get you to think about many different aspects of your giving. Giving to the church is just as important as praying, or sharing the gospel. It is not the amount that is given, but a heart condition. **I understand there are life events, there are situations, for whatever reason medical bills, education bills, food bills, legal or tax bills, I get it, we all deal with life events. I tell you this, do not hide behind those reasons as reasons not to give. Give what you can and God will employ it.**

**So I ask you have you been transformed by the blood of Jesus? If you respond with a resounding yes then your giving should reflect that. You can do all the outward things a Christian does, showing up, serving in the nursery, singing with a beautiful noise, but it is the inward things that you will either be condemned with or rewarded with. Now I want you to listen to me when I tell you that giving is an inward action, just like your prayer life is an inward action. It starts with the heart and ends with the heart. Yes, I said the act of giving is an act of the heart.**

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As 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. Paul exhorted and praised different churches for this very act. We must recognize that we in this very room are a community. We have something very much in common, we are to share and provide. Some of us have more to share than others and we are called to share them. We are not called to compare or question, but to give and to give joyfully and abundantly.

How much did Christ give to the church? How much did Christ give to glorify the Father? How much did Christ give to purify the church?

And we give token amounts or amounts that we are comfortable in giving. That should cause us pause and to really look at ourselves and our motives. We get a lot and we give a little. What if Christ used that same logic? Gave only what He was comfortable giving or what He thought He could afford without suffering? You cannot have sacrificial giving without the sacrifice.

So I ask you how is your giving? That tells you how thankful you are for the blood of Jesus and to be a part of the Bride of Christ, the church, or are you still that pew potato?