

Basic Bible Doctrine Study Series – Session 5

Giving

When it comes to the teaching of giving, Baptists turned to the concept of “storehouse tithing.” This is the idea that church members should give a minimum of ten percent of their income to their local church. Down through the years much debate has taken place as to whether tithing is a New Testament practice that should be taught and encouraged by the church. The argument is often made that tithing was part of the Old Testament law and has been replaced by a different standard in the New Testament. To a certain extent this is true and will be discussed later in our study.

For the purposes of this session of our study, we will focus on the entirety of giving and not just the financial aspect. Giving done correctly and Biblically will encompass all areas of our lives...our time, our talents as well as our tithe. For most people, giving in any one specific area can be easy but to properly give in all areas takes dedication and discipline.

With that said, let’s begin our session by talking about the Biblical principle of giving...both Old and New Testament...and then address the specific aspects of giving...our time, our talents and our tithe.

Biblical Principle of Giving

In scripture, the principle of giving precedes the law and again...we are not just discussing financial giving as that is only part of the principle. When God asked Noah and Abraham to give of themselves, did He only ask for 10%? The answer of course is NO. God asked the same of Noah and Abraham that He asks of us today. He wants us to give Him our all. We should remind ourselves that there is no place in the Bible where we are encouraged to offer less than 100%.

Let’s look at some scripture that can help us better understand the Biblical principle of giving...

Genesis 6:12-14; 22 “God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways. So God said to Noah, I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth. So make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out. Noah did everything just as God commanded him.”

Genesis 12:1 and 4 “The Lord had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you. So Abram went, as the Lord had told him.”

Mark 12:41-43 “Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.”

2 Corinthians 9:7 “Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”

Philippians 4:19 “And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.”

The Bible teaches that God is the true “owner” of everything and that we are simply stewards or managers of it. Christians need to be taught this concept because our natural tendency is just the opposite. We are like small children yelling, “MINE...MINE...MINE!” That's why it is so important that we understand both the value of things and how to handle them in ways that are pleasing to God.

When it comes to Jesus and His teaching of giving, the approach is the same as the rest of the law. Not only did Jesus teach us what the law really meant but he took the application of it to a whole new level. If we are blessed with the means to help someone in need or help the church (our time, our talents or our tithe) and refuse to do it then we are in violation of the Biblical principle of giving. Never forget that every New Testament example of giving goes beyond the tithe.

Matthew 25:31-40 “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right, Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me. Then the righteous will answer him, Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you? The King will reply, Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”

Probably the most important thing to understand is that when God established the principle of giving, He did so for our benefit. When done properly, giving teaches us how to keep God first in our lives and also how to be unselfish. God is always more concerned with how we give than with what we give.

Biblical Aspects of Giving

As mentioned already more than once in our study, Biblical giving doesn't just involve our money (tithe)...it also involves our time and our talents as well. In other words, we give to God all of ourselves not just part. Unfortunately, it seems for most Christians that the hardest thing to turn over to God is their finances. Christians are no different than the rest of the world's population when it comes to views of money and material things. God never intended for His children to accumulate insurmountable debt and live beyond their means. When we turn our finances over to God and learn

to handle them Biblically, we will find that we are far better off than trying to manage everything on our own.

Let ask...then answer a couple of questions...

Why should we give...monetarily?

According to Psalm 50, God owns everything so He doesn't need our money. We give monetarily because WE need our money and we need His blessing on it. As mentioned earlier we also give so we can learn to keep God first as well as how to be unselfish. According to Malachi 3, giving is an area in which God actually tells us to test Him. "Test me in this, says the Lord Almighty, and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it" (Malachi 3:10). God is essentially telling us that we will never be able to give more than He will give.

Have you ever heard a fellow Christian say, "I can't afford to give money to the church?" Sure you have. The reality is in fact that a Christian can't afford to not to give monetarily to the church. Tithing is a lot like having kids...if you wait until you can afford to do so then you never will.

Why should we use 10% as a guideline?

Simply put...the tithe (10%) was established by God in His Word. Abraham started this practice back in Genesis 14 and it was continued by God's people under the law (Leviticus 27). As discussed many times before in our studies, God doesn't do random. By establishing 10% as a guideline or starting point for monetary giving He ensured that everyone would be able to give and that it would affect us equally regardless of our income. The person who makes \$100 per week and gives \$10 is affected equally as the person who makes \$1000 per week and gives \$100.

So what about those who want to argue that tithing is an Old Testament custom and command and has no application to the New Testament church since we are not under the law anymore? Well I'm glad you asked! Let's talk about how monetary giving is addressed to us as the New Testament church.

In Matthew 5:17 Jesus said, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them." In other words Jesus is telling us that He is not doing away with the law but He is going to show us what it really means. The Pharisees had become extremely focused on following the letter of the law without understanding the intent of the law. Remember what Jesus said about murder and adultery later in Matthew 5? "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment. But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. You have heard that it was said, You shall not commit

adultery. But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” (Matthew 5:21-22; 27-28)

This same reasoning is applied to our giving. We don't find reference to a tithe or 10% in the New Testament because our giving was never intended to be limited. As with every other area in our lives, God wants complete control and the reality is if He doesn't have control of your finances, then He doesn't have control of you. In Acts chapters 2 and 4 we see examples of the early church giving to meet needs not giving to meet a percentage. We would all benefit greatly by giving God all of us...including our finances.

Unfortunately, it seems in our day that Christians don't align themselves with scripture when it comes to their monetary giving. According to information found in the Baptist Press, tithing decreased approximately 62 percent from calendar years 2001 to 2002. They cited a study done by the Barna Research Group. 1,010 adults were surveyed and the results showed that the proportion of households tithing...giving 10 percent of income...to churches dropped from 8 percent in 2001 to just 3 percent in 2002. According to data by Christian Financial Concepts in the September 2000 issue of SBC LIFE, 20 percent of evangelical church members give 80 percent of the money contributed to their church, while 30 percent give the other 20 percent. Fifty percent of church members give nothing to their church.

Along with the monetary aspect of our giving we need to also focus on the aspects of giving related to our time and our talents. For some, monetary giving is the easy way out. Put some money in the offering plate and the giving obligation is fulfilled. Again...in order to line up with Scripture and please Him with our lives, He must have control of all parts of our lives.

Giving of our time is difficult but necessary. When is the last time you took time to help someone in need or donated time to help with something at the church? When is the last time you gave of your time to talk with someone about Christ or to read more of His Word or to spend more time with Him in prayer?

The church needs all its members to step up, find their talents and put them to work. We have reached a sad state in most of our churches where the same few people have to step up and do everything because others refuse to do anything. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul described the church as a body. He went on to say that when a part of the body doesn't perform its function then the body is damaged. It doesn't function correctly because another part has to compensate. The reality is that we have people in our churches performing functions they should not be performing because others refuse to do their part. We all must discover what God has called us to do and get busy doing it.

As we discussed earlier, giving helps us keep God first in our lives and teaches us to be unselfish. Unfortunately, the statistics show that the percentages found in monetary giving are nearly identical to those found in the other areas of giving...time and talents. It seems there is a very small percentage of Christians who are doing the majority of giving. Is it any wonder our churches are struggling and our church members have essentially no kind of positive relationship with Him?